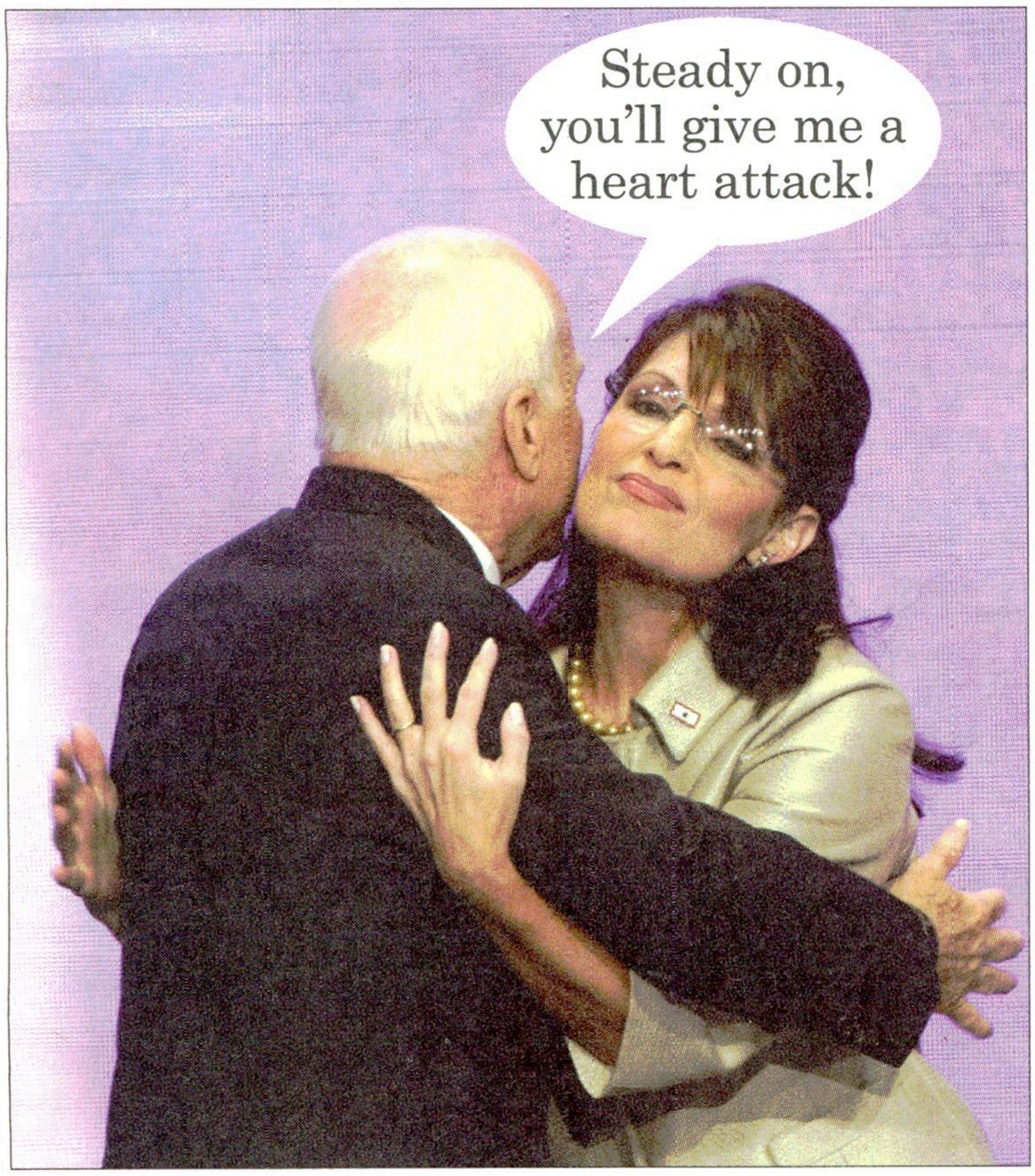
No. 1219
19 September –
2 Oct. 2008
£1.50

PRIVATE EYE

END OF WORLD SPECIAL

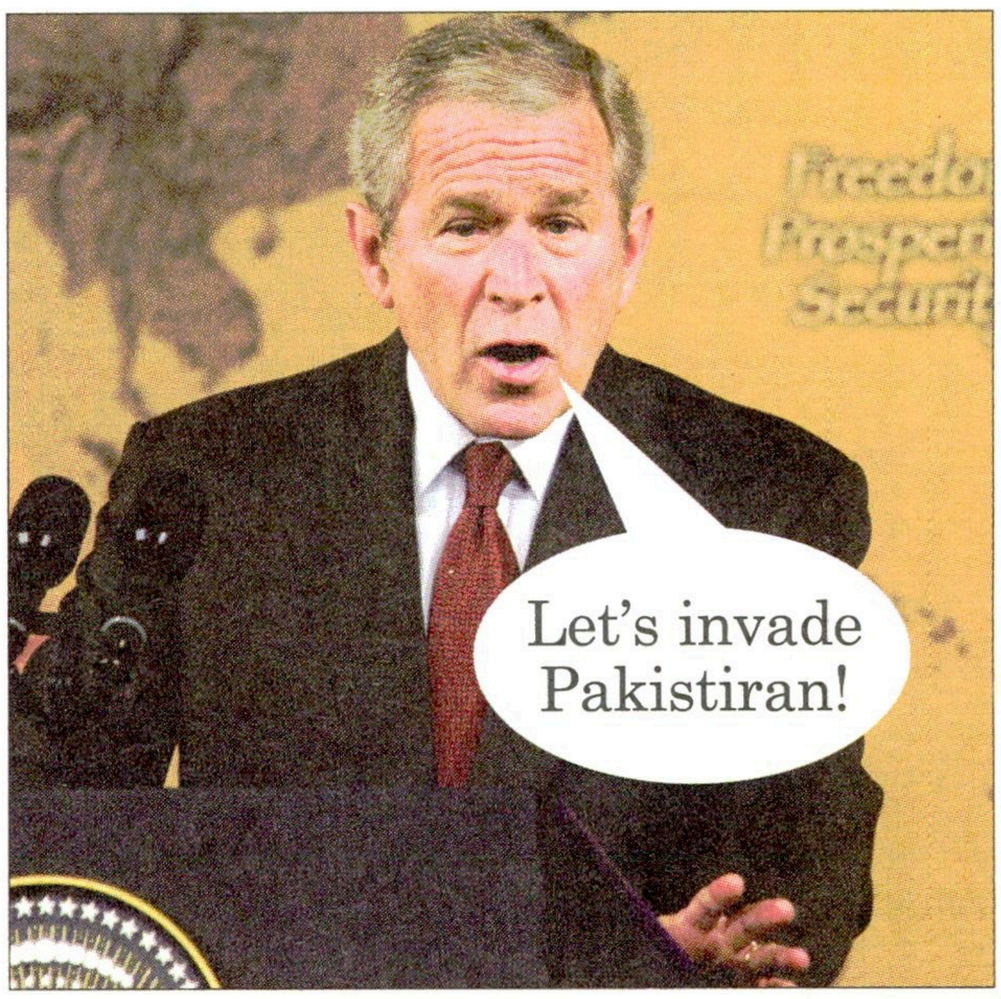
PALIN TRIUMPH



BROWN CRISIS

WALL STREET CRASH

BUSH STEPS IN



The attention to detail won't surprise you.
The monthly payment might.

Mercedes-Benz

E220 CDI Avantgarde with automatic transmission

Monthly payment**	£329	On the road price	£33,625
Customer deposit	£5,499	Total charge for credit	£2,243
Retailer deposit contribution*	£3,448	Amount of credit	£27,926
Optional purchase payment†	£15,000	Total amount payable by the customer‡	£35,868
Acceptance fee	£180	Total amount payable†	£36,068
Purchase activation fee†	£95	Typical 4.2% APR	

Visit mercedes-benz.co.uk/offers or text 'e' to 64500.

Official government fuel consumption figures (MPG/Litres Per 100Km) for the E220 CDI Avantgarde: urban 31.0/9.1, extra urban 52.3/5.4, combined 42.2/6.7. CO_2 emissions (g/km): 177. Model shown is a Mercedes-Benz E220 CDI Avantgarde. Total price: £33,625 on the road, including optional automatic transmission at £1,490. (Price includes VAT, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, number plates, first registration fee and a full tank of fuel.) Prices correct at time of going to print.**Based on a Mercedes-Benz E220 CDI Avantgarde with automatic transmission on a Mercedes-Benz Agility agreement.*The Retailer contribution is towards the deposit and is only available with this finance offer. †Payable if you exercise the option to purchase the car. ‡Includes optional purchase payment and purchase activation fee. Credit provided subject to status by Mercedes-Benz Financial Services UK Ltd, MK7 8ND. Vehicles must be registered between 01/07/08 and 30/09/08. Terms and conditions apply. We reserve the right not to allow this subsidised rate to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Gnome

AT AN emotional press conference Lord Gnome, Chairman of GnomeAir, wept as he told reporters of his distress at the collapse of his holiday firm.

"It is not my fault," he sobbed, "that I do not know how to run a business. It is very difficult nowadays with oil prices going up and down and all that sort of thing and I turned out to be no good at it. The truth is that six months ago nobody could have foreseen how useless I would prove to be."

Asked why he had continued to take bookings until the very last minute, Lord Gnome said, "I wanted the money."

He then apologised to all the stranded holidaymakers, saying, "I am very, very sorry that I didn't make even more money out of you silly people before I got out."

●**FREE DVD in today's *Eye*:** *They Didn't Fly To Bruges*. Classic weepie in which plucky British holidaymakers fail to go on agreeable European city break.

EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.
Tel: 020 7437 4017. Fax: 020 7437 0705.
Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk
Website: www.private-eye.co.uk

PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS/SALES
PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
Subscription enquiries: 01795 414 871
Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 870 Fax: 01795 414 555.
Web: www.subsonline.co.uk
Email: private-eye@servicehelpline.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£28 per annum. Europe and Eire £34. Airmail (rest of world) £38.
Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR.
Email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com
Display: 020 7878 2366 **Classified:** 020 7240 9129

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ. **Distributed** by COMAG Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 7QE. Tel 01895 433600.

ABC

Bank on us

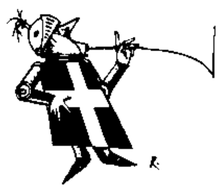
■ Atom antics: Fleet St's Red Face Day 5
■ Dearest Cowpat! Debo's Diary 23
■ Books: Portillo's page-turnerzzz 24, 25
■ Lockerbie: What price justice? 26
■ How GPs can damage your health 27
■ Toxic shock: Lehman's UK mortgages 28, 29

QUOTE OF THE DECADE

"Lehman Brothers is a great company today that can both look backwards with pride and look forwards with hope. And in wishing Lehman Brothers the success it deserves for its future, let me thank you for the privilege of being here and formally declare this new building open."

– Gordon Brown, opening Lehman's flashy new European HQ, Canary Wharf, 5 April 2004.

ONE IN THE EYE...



THE *Eye's* exposure of the unaffordability and big military risks of plans to privatise defence training in a £12bn PFI deal has angered the man running the project, Brigadier Geoff Nield.

"I regret to return to you on the subject of the leakage of DTR related material to the press," he writes in a memo. "You will be aware of most of the articles on package 1 [the main, PFI, element of training reform] which have appeared in *Private Eye*." What really riled Nield was our exposure of the cancellation of a planned announcement before parliament broke up. "The act of someone to release this latter information to a *Private Eye* journalist is clearly illegal, contrary to the official secrets act," he mutters darkly.

Nield might be over-egging it as the official secrets act contains a public interest defence. Or maybe he thinks the public would be better off *not* knowing that the deal, which the MoD has refused to justify financially or operationally, is on the ropes. Or that the MoD's own secret assessment betrays the risk that "training output fails to meet the requirements of operational command".

D-day is due this month with an announcement on signing the PFI contract or – given the problems and latest rumours that the sale of MoD sites on which the deal depends has fallen through – abandoning PFI altogether.

All of which makes the timing of last week's sale by the MoD of its remaining 19.8 percent stake in QinetiQ, owner of Metrix, highly unusual. If the MoD pulls the defence training deal, QinetiQ's share price will be hit and questions will be asked about whether the forthcoming announcement was a factor in the sell-off decision and, if so, whether inside information played a part.

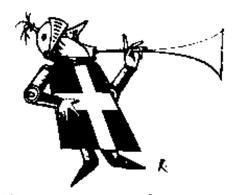
If the deal goes ahead and QinetiQ's stock rises, however, another badly-timed government sale will have cost taxpayers millions. Remember: you read it here first.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

$6.6bn Losses by Lehman Brothers in 2008 up to point it went bankrupt

$8.7bn Staff bonuses paid out by Lehman Bros in 2006

TWO IN THE EYE...



A FUNNY thing happened at the publicly-owned international development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, after the *Eye* made a freedom of information request last month to see its internal development impact reports.

Within days, CDC's "communications" people were on to the PR agencies to commission a campaign starting asap. "Message development and campaign planning: September" stated the brief. "Implementation: October to December".

The unholy trinity of CDC, its fund management arm Actis and the department for international development (DfID) – who regularly claim to act at arm's length from one another – have turned to PR firm Quiller, led by John Major's former political secretary Jonathan Hill, to spin the "development impact" of CDC's work to the public and "opinion formers".

These "opinion formers" must include auditors at the National Audit Office, who are reviewing DfID's handling of the fund, and MPs including Tory Tim Loughton and Lib Dem shadow development secretary Michael Moore who are showing increasing interest in the *Eye*'s revelations of the fund's transformation into a private equity operation that maximises profits at the expense of development – not least through deserting third world agriculture.

CDC's director of corporate communications initially denied categorically that there was a PR campaign, insisting that the fund always wanted to explain what it does. Yet the official brief is headed "Joint DfID, CDC and Actis development impact campaign".

DfID has already told parliament it is thinking about tightening up CDC's increasingly discredited investment policy (see *Eye* 1216) and may well be anxious to head off a full-scale parliamentary inquiry. But paying PR agencies to spin performance just as official auditors and parliament are trying to get to the bottom of it is a novel way to spend taxpayers' money intended for poverty relief.

● *See "The China syndrome", p.26.*

Street Of Shame

***SUNDAY TIMES* business pundit Irwin Stelzer revealed last weekend that Freddie Mac, the tottering American mortgage company rescued by the Bush administration in the biggest nationalisation in American history, was "a consulting client of mine".**

Six years ago Stelzer admitted that he was a consultant to Enron, which collapsed in 2002 in what was then the biggest corporate bankruptcy in history. Where next for the Curse of Stelzer? Well, he is also the pet adviser to Rupert Murdoch. Anyone with shares in News International should run for the hills at once…

ET TU, Polly? "Unseating a prime minister is very high risk – but a dying party should be ready to take dangerous medicine if that's the last chance left," announced *Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee on 6 September.

"One bungle follows another and yet those about to die sit silently by… A cabinet of minnows and spineless backbenchers include many – perhaps most – who want Brown gone, but lack the nerve to act."

So what fool failed to see through those minnows for the small fry they were back in June 2007, describing them thus: "As they stepped into No 10 yesterday, here was as decent and clever a team of ministers as ever graced the cabinet table. Two Milibands, Ed Balls, Jackie Smith, Harriet Harman, Alan Johnson, Douglas Alexander, Peter Hain and Hilary Benn – with the likes of John Denham and Yvette Cooper in attendance – present a good front"? Er, Polly Toynbee.

That, however, was back in the days when her colleague Jackie Ashley was predicting that "It seems that Brown has the capacity to be an excellent manager, particularly of crises," and chuckling that "the lurch from Brown-worship to Brown-kicking has been a cut-out-and-keep guide to journalistic perfidy… I don't want to come over all Michael Winner, but 'calm down, dear' is the text of the hour."

And how calm was Ashley last week, when forecasting Brown's imminent defenestration? "The Labour party is facing not only an electoral smash, but a final falling out between modernisers and old Labour. This, combined with no money and another flight of talent, could mean the party's destruction as a major force in British politics. I wish I thought that was hyperbole."

NEARLY 18 months on from Madeleine McCann's disappearance, and still Britain's media refuses to give up the hunt for new ways to milk the story.

"A girl who went missing four years ago and became known as 'Italy's Madeleine McCann' was apparently found alive last night. Denise Pipitone was only four when she vanished in September 2004," the *Daily Mail* reported on 12 September, blithely brushing aside such concepts as precedence and linear time, not to mention the fact that the phrase "Italy's Madeleine McCann" had hitherto never appeared anywhere in the global media.

Perhaps mindful of this, the *Daily Mirror* insisted on waiting for scientific confirmation: "DNA tests were being carried out last night on an eight-year-old girl to see if she is Italy's version of Madeleine McCann."

As it turns out, she wasn't even Italy's version of Denise Pipitone, with tests establishing that the Albanian gypsy who had been arrested with her on the Greek island of Kos was, as she insisted, her mother – a fact which went unnoted in either the *Mail* or the *Mirror*.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"In the end, Communist Chic is not so very different from the Western variety. As Daniel Bell said in *The End of Ideology*: 'Capitalism... is a system wherein man exploits man... and Communism is vice versa'…

"The Ossis were struggling to manufacture a coloured enamel bucket…

"For President Eisenhower's visit he ordered (to impress) an 8,000 horsepower speedboat designed by Yuri Soloviev. The Soviet President said: 'She's made in the bourgeois style, but I like her'."

– **Stephen Bayley** in the *Times*, 4/10/07

"The different cultures do, however, have one thing in common: in *The End of Ideology*, Daniel Bell said: 'Capitalism... is a system wherein man exploits man... and Communism is vice versa'…

"The Ossis (East Germans) had trouble making enamel buckets…

"For Eisenhower's visit to Moscow, Khrushchev commissioned the Soviet Union's sole celebrity designer, Yuri Soloviev, to make an 8,000 horsepower speedboat. 'She's bourgeois... but I like her,' the Russian said."

– **Stephen Bayley** in the *Observer*, 7/09/08

THE *New Statesman* was, as usual, backing the brothers in Brighton, with extensive coverage of the TUC Congress and a pull-out 32-page "Trade Union Guide" free with the 8 September issue.

The supplement, commissioned by Liana Wood, began with the thunderous declaration that "women are still second-class citizens in the world of work. They are paid less than men and are more likely to be in precarious employment".

The sisters in Brighton were delighted by Ms Wood's efforts, even though no one had heard of her. She is, in fact, a 22-year-old Cambridge graduate trying to break into journalism by working as the *Statesman*'s office dogsbody. She was told she would be paid precisely nothing for commissioning the supplement.

Ah, the sisters might retort, but surely when she gets her big break the magazine's Brownite co-owners Geoffrey Robinson and Mike Danson will grant her full employment rights? Alas, no. Their principled left-wing weekly refuses to recognise trade unions. Members of the National Union of Journalists at the magazine have been trying to agree official recognition of their chapel since May, only to be rebuffed repeatedly by comrades Robinson and Danson.

RUM goings on in Rome, where a brace of correspondents for UK broadsheets was recently summoned to the British ambassador's residence.

Were great matters of state at stake? Er, no. Ambassador Edward Chaplin merely wanted hacks to "clear the air" with Silvio Berlusconi's official spokesman Paolo Buonaiuti, who had taken great offence at the unflattering way in which the self-proclaimed "Jesus Christ of politics" (who has never quite recovered from his failure to sue the *Economist* for declaring him "unfit to govern Italy" seven years ago) is portrayed in the foreign press.

In the event, the proposed lunch was cancelled when it was realised it clashed with US vice-president Dick Cheney's visit to the Italian capital. But while foreign correspondents have grown wearily used to being hauled into the foreign ministries of their host countries for a dressing down whenever they write anything remotely critical of the ruling regime, they cannot help wondering why should their own country's ambassador suddenly be so keen to take on the role of Berlusconi's PR representative?

EAR-PLUGS and a strong constitution are once again *de rigueur* at the *Daily Mail*, where potty-mouthed editor Paul Dacre – after a brief vow of decorum – is now "double-cunting" his underlings again, as in: "You useless, cunting cunt."

But someone – or something – has at last bitten back. Dacre returned from holiday recently sporting an eye-patch that mostly masks what looks suspiciously like a black eye.

THE feud between *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger and erstwhile *Observer* bigwig Roger Alton, now in charge at the *Independent*, continues to simmer in the most unlikeliest of battlegrounds – the debate over whose paper is the Toriest.

"Look at today's new-fangled Altonised *Independent*," exclaimed the *Grauniad*'s media commentator Roy Greenslade back at the end of July, shocked by the *Indy*'s "week-long look at Conservative policy with a somewhat approving catchline, 'Preparing For Power'… Once I knew what my *Independent* stood for, but now I'm a little uncertain. Will it make me blue by going all Tory?"

No, *you're* the dirty Thatcher-lovers, retorted the *Indy*'s media section this week in a full-page hatchet job it had clearly been brooding over for some time. "The historic relationship between the Labour party and *The Guardian* is at an unprecedented low following a furious row over positive articles about the Conservatives," James Macintyre revealed.

"Labour sources have for a number of months expressed dismay at some political coverage in the *Guardian*, claiming that some influential figures at the paper are privately supportive of David Cameron… A senior executive said it was wrong to blame [chief leader writer] Julian Glover because editor Mr Rusbridger takes responsibility."

But it's not with politics that Alton is making his mark at the Indy, turning instead to the old formula for which he was famous at the *Obs*: "Bit more sex on the front page. More sport. That kind of thing."

Two Saturdays ago saw the launch of his new pull-out sports section, while the following weekend brought *The Independent Guide to Love & Sex*, aka Roger's Rogering.

Issue one, "Attraction", came free with the paper on Saturday 13th, while *Independent on Sunday* readers were treated to "Seduction" the next day. Alas, anyone hoping to achieve "Consummation" was forced to wait till Monday and shell out a full pound for the privilege – that just happening to be the same day the paper raised its cover price by 25 percent!

"A woman can never have too many bags"

VETERAN *Screws* hack James Weatherup clearly fancies himself as a model, which may perhaps be just as well if editor Colin Myler has his way.

The wannabe page-seven fella took great delight in posing topless for the paper's sex column photo story, but Myler was unimpressed by Weatherup's jape – not to mention his skimpy black knickers – and ordered the pictures to be pulled.

Myler then suspended Weatherup. It seems that the bungling editor, who recently had to pay out £60,000 damages to F1's Max Mosley, is understandably nervous about running pictures of strange men in their underpants.

"NEW mother Halle Berry vows to keep baby Nahla away from the public eye," noted the *Daily Mail* approvingly in July at "news" that the actress wanted to preserve her child's right to privacy and had "refused to follow the celebrity trend for selling exclusive photos of their newborns".

So much for the child's right to privacy in the *Mail*, however. A little over a month later, the rag gushed: "How Berry beautiful your new daughter is, Halle! Actress takes baby Nahla to the zoo" – in a "scoop" accompanied by colour pictures to capture this moment of huge "public interest".

CONGRATULATIONS to the *Mail on Sunday*'s football newshound Bob Cass, who has put the rest of the E I Addio pack to shame in the last few weeks with his exclusive back-page scoops.

On 11 August he reported that "Manchester United will launch an astonishing £20 million bid to land Thierry Henry before next weekend's Premier League curtain-raiser against Newcastle United. Sir Alex Ferguson, whose team warm up against FA Cup winners Portsmouth in the FA Community Shield today, has made the ex-Arsenal hitman his top priority following the breakdown of United's attempt to sign Dimitar Berbatov from Tottenham." By the time the August transfer window had closed three weeks later United had shown not the slightest flicker of interest in Henry but had signed Berbatov.

Cass followed this up with his claim a fortnight ago that "Michael Owen will be handed the job of spearheading Fabio Capello's attempt to restore England's sagging morale when he is named in the squad for the crucial World Cup qualifiers against Andorra and Croatia." Later that day, Owen wasn't even named in the squad, never mind spearheading the attack. Is it any wonder that poor Bob is now known to colleagues as "Cass-a-Blanker"?

MORE on Phil Hall, the former *News of the Screws* and *Hello!* editor who has now turned his hand to football PR. In *Eye* 1217 we reported how he had hitched his wagon to Thaksin Shinawatra, the deposed Thai ruler who had bought Manchester City and was described by Amnesty International as a "human rights abuser of the worst kind".

Not long after the *Eye* went to press, Hall set up a series of national newspaper interviews with the club's new executive chairman Garry Cook. The idea was to reassure fans and the football establishment that Shinawatra was a pretty straight kinda guy who had not tried to sell players behind the manager's back, as reported in the *Eye*, and would continue to support the club despite having had his assets frozen after fleeing trial in his home country.

Nearly every paper cleared a page for Cook's arslikhan and corporate bollocks: "The club is not for sale, but what we are looking to do is bring in some integral partners who can work with us because we are trying to get through this cash challenge that we've created... Is he [Shinawatra] a nice guy? Yes. Is he a great guy to play golf with? Yes. Has he got the finances to run a football club? Yes. I really care about those three things."

Whoops! Just over a week later Shinawatra was out after selling up, having apparently kept Hall and Cook in the dark about his plans.

THEATRE NEWS

MORE bitching in the Critics' Circle, where former Fleet Street theatre critic Michael Coveney has taken a swipe at the *Daily Telegraph*'s man in the stalls, Charles Spencer.

The liverish Coveney was enraged when Spencer approached him during an interval at the Hampstead Theatre and started to talk about the production they were watching (Brecht's *Turandot*). This broke the unwritten rule that critics studiously avoid discussing a production until they have all written their reviews.

Coveney took his revenge in a blog he writes for Whatsonstage.com, accusing Spencer of "frothiness" and "childish glee" as he mocked the Brecht show. "He was like an idiot with a rattle."

It was surely only forgetfulness that prevented Coveney from pointing out that Spencer was offered Coveney's old job as *Daily Mail* theatre critic four years ago. Initially Spencer accepted the position. The *Mail* duly fired Coveney. Then Spencer said he didn't want the job after all. But by then it was too late. Coveney had lost his seat on the merry-go-round and plainly remains very cross.

HACKWATCH

Big Bang Cobblers Day

FOR the last month, the BBC has been hyping an "extraordinary event" that it created and dubbed "Big Bang Day", on 10 September.

In August it put out a press release gushing that an entire day of programming would coincide with the "switch-on of the fastest atom-smasher in the world" and "one of the most exciting scientific experiments ever attempted when physicists try to recreate the aftermath of the Big Bang". And so on through all official channels and in trails.

Even though none of this was actually true, Fleet Street was happy to run with the idea that a big dangerous experiment was starting up on 10 September. Scientists at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in Geneva tried to point out that starting up the machine was a process of commissioning and "not as simple as flipping a switch" and that the process was a lengthy one that had been going on since January. But the 10th was a convenient peg, because the LHC's major milestone (when protons are actually smashed together) was harder to predict. September 10th, then, when a beam would travel around the LHC for the first time, was far less interesting scientifically but more convenient for the news diary. And thus began the flamming up of Big Bang day.

On the 9th, the London *Evening Standard* wrote that scientists were preparing to "switch on" the world's biggest scientific experiment. The next day, the *Telegraph*'s front page announced that: "At 8.30 this morning scientists will throw the switch… will attempt to recreate the conditions that existed fractions of a second after the Big Bang". While the *Independent's* leader column explained: "Today is the day... In the largest physics experiment ever attempted, protons will be smashed together at unprecedented speeds, recreating the conditions that existed in the aftermath of the Big Bang... The scientific world is abuzz with what they might discover."

Even the page three girl at the *Sun* had something to say: "Keeley can't wait for boffins to turn on the Large Hadron Collider today. She added, helpfully: 'It's so exciting. The machine's main purpose is to explore the validity and limitations of the current theoretical picture for particle physics'."

The lack of any experimentation didn't deter hacks from describing the 10th as a day when the secrets of the universe would be probed, black holes created, the Higgs boson discovered, or the world ended, etc. As the The *Sun* wrote: "At 8.30am today, a machine which some fear could create a giant black hole capable of swallowing the planet will be switched on." Even the *Telegraph* trumpeted: "If it's 8.31 and you're still reading this," then the world had not ended. In fact, without any particle smashing there was never even the possibility of the end of the world.

As anyone watching or listening live on the 10th discovered, not a great deal happened. Even the beam, which was supposed to whizz around for the first time at 8.30am, was actually slowly nursed around the LHC in uneventful stages. It was such a non-event that Andrew Marr, reporting live for *Radio 4's Today Programme* and with "exclusive" access to the LHC control room, seemed uncertain when the "historic moment for world science" actually happened. "Oh, it's... it's happened," he said at one point. But it hadn't.

The BBC's attempts to flam up Big Bang day backfired. It started to fall apart when a request for a big red button to push to start the machine were rebuffed by scientists. Nonetheless, the proposal was so amusing that before the event LHC staff referred to the 10th with great amusement as "Red Button Day". Reports that the BBC also asked LHC bosses to launch the experiment to coincide with the 8.30am slot on *Today*, appear to be true. However, rumours that the entire day itself was shifted because of Andrew Marr's holiday, were rejected by LHC staff.

It was Mark Damazer, controller of Radio 4, who first dreamt up the concept of a themed day for what is an important new era of physics research. But in the stampede to match his vision with reality, everyone overlooked the uncomfortable fact that science happens bit by bit and is unpredictable. So creating a news event around the process of research was a flawed idea from the beginning and destined to deliver far less than was offered.

DRUNKS & DRUNKMEN

HACKS writing about the imminent demise of the Colony Room Club, the Dean Street drinking den frequented by low-life piss-artists for the past 60 years, appear to have missed the real story.

Coverage has been as sentimental as a souse on his sixth large gin: "Last bastion of old Soho… Francis Bacon… Dylan Thomas… Jeffrey Bernard… polari… Peter O'Toole… barristers… burglars… rude staff… outrageous prices… everyone endearingly called 'cunty'… er, what a tragedy."

It has been reported that the club must close because the lease is running out and the landlord wants to convert it into flats; and on on 27 September auctioneer Lyon & Turnbull is holding a sale of the Colony's considerable collection of modern art, including a mural by Michael Andrews supposedly painted in 1957 to cover an unpaid bar bill.

But club members fleetingly sober enough to be aware of what is going on are threatening a legal challenge to the sale. They claim most of the artworks are not club secretary Michael Wojas's to sell, but the property of the club. They object to Wojas referring to himself as "proprietor" when he is, they say, merely an employee. Unless Wojas – who could not be contacted by *Eye* – agrees to an annual general meeting to clear the air, the members will seek an injunction to freeze the assets and halt the sale. One told the *Eye*: "The members are mostly drunkards, but money does somehow seem to concentrate the mind."

Another question is why the club appears to be bankrupt. The rent of £12,500 is cheap by Soho standards, and although the lease is due to expire, under its terms a new lease at a higher but still affordable rent could have been negotiated, say the objectors. The current membership of about 250 pay £150 per year (or most of them do), which should be more than sufficient to pay rent, rates and other outgoings. And, because of the thirsty clientele, takings across the bar are considerable.

Where's the money gone?

'Lifetime O'Booze'

JUST FANCY THAT!

"MURRAY [Andy], in Churchill's phrase about China, is a mystery wrapped in an enigma," opined David Mellor in the *Evening Standard* on 10 September.

And what exactly was Churchill's memorable phrase about China? Ah, yes: "*Russia* is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."

GORDON BROWN's "listening government" was in control freak mode when the cabinet met in Birmingham last week and hosted a "Q&A session with members of the public".

Readers of the local paper, the *Birmingham Mail*, were invited to apply to "talk to and quiz the 23 cabinet members". The Downing Street press office, however, issued strict instructions to the hacks as to how to select the 12 names ("Make sure you ask them what issues they want to raise – we don't want any surprises") of whom it would reject all but four.

Having helped supply a tame audience for the Q&A session, the paper was then denied access to the room where it took place ("we don't want guests put off by the cameras" was the lame excuse). And the hacks themselves were only allowed to put one question to the PM "on the stairs" as he left the event on condition they told his minders in advance what it would be.

No wonder this exercise in "dialogue and consensus" Brown-style went down like a lead balloon. The *Birmingham Mail*'s political editor, Neil Elkes, reminded his readers how different it was the last time the paper helped organise a prime ministerial Q&A in the city. "We were told to get six readers, our choice, to the hotel suite where Tony Blair would talk to them, which he did, for an hour, without prior notice of the questions. He was relaxed, unfazed and confident in the hands of half a dozen Brummies."

DAVID CAMERON seems to have put his foot in it by accusing Gordon Brown of inaction over rising oil prices, and in particular the influence of speculators.

In June he told the Commons: "Clearly, the supply of crude oil is important, but what is he [the prime minister] proposing to do about the danger that prices are being driven higher because financial institutions are investing so heavily in commodities, including oil?"

Ah yes, those horrid wheeler-dealers who drive up commodity prices…

This month regulators in the US report that 50 percent of oil contracts on the New York Mercantile Exchange are held by financial firms – ie speculators – rather than by oil companies. One firm in particular holds so many contracts – 11 percent of the total – the regulators have reclassified it as a speculator rather than an oil dealer.

And what's the firm's name? The *Washington Post* has identified it as none other than Swiss-based oil conglomerate Vitol, whose boss Ian Taylor gave Dave's Tories £160,000! As *Eye* readers know (issue 1214), most of that money went to fund the office of shadow energy minister Alan Duncan, himself a former Vitol consultant. So while Dave whines that Gordon isn't paying enough attention to oil speculation, Tory energy policy is funded by the boss of a firm accused of being a top speculator!

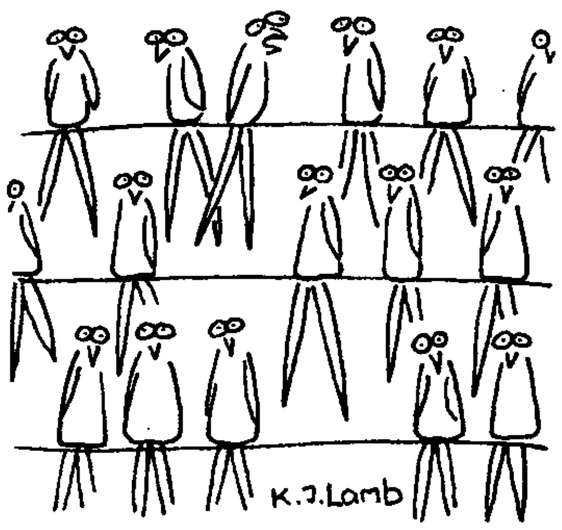
Vitol told the *Eye* that describing it as a speculator was "fundamentally incorrect", and emphasised that it ships millions of barrels of real, physical oil a day. Alan Duncan's office made no response.

WHY no word on the £16bn Crossrail project since it was given the go-ahead (yet again) by Gordon Brown in his pre-non-election announcements last autumn?

The reason is simple. Despite the bill being passed during the summer, there are strong signs the treasury is reluctant to sign off the project. (Remember: the last version of Crossrail was killed off just as the recession of the early 1990s set in.)

In secret, therefore, the Crossrail team – which has so far spent a good half-billion before a single sod has been turned – has drawn up a mini version of the scheme as a contingency. Instead of a full-size tunnel between Liverpool Street and Paddington, there would be a Tube size tunnel which would be far cheaper but, obviously, accommodate far fewer people.

Douglas Oakervee, the abrasive head of Crossrail, commissioned a consultant to look at ways of reducing costs through a process called "value engineering". Along with using cheaper materials and the like, the masterful suggestion was made to cram Londoners more tightly into the trains, forgetting that most of the journey would be on the tracks outside including long trips out to Maidenhead and Shenfield when people would expect more comfort. This idea was kept under wraps to avoid upsetting the parliamentary process but is now ready to be presented to ministers if the treasury moves to scrap the scheme.



"What's the point of these conferences?"

FORMER long-serving armed forces minister Adam Ingram's appointment as a £50,000-a-year consultant for the *Eye*'s favourite IT firm, EDS, is just reward for six years at the MoD helping bolster the firm's business.

EDS's notable successes in recent years include a £250m contract to take the forces' payroll (with predictably disastrous results so far), membership of the Metrix consortium negotiating a £12bn (and rising) PFI deal to privatise military training, and a £4bn contract won in 2004 to overhaul all military and civilian defence IT.

Outside defence, it was recently named on the list of firms to work on ID cards, a scheme also keenly supported by Ingram.

The defence IT contract is way behind schedule and has already triggered compensation clauses. But after Lib Dem MP Mike Hancock asked about extra payments two years ago, EDS's blushes were spared when a certain helpful defence minister refused to discuss them as they were "commercially confidential".

Huge IT contracts involve years of negotiations over payments, for which an insider like Ingram will come in very useful – which may explain why he was banned from lobbying the government for 12 months after leaving office. Now, though, he can start knocking on the MoD's door.

IN AN interview last week with the parliamentary *Monitor* magazine, former army chief General Sir Mike Jackson called for the government to devote more attention to military spending, which has not been reviewed for 10 years.

"What needs to happen is a real debate on what proportion of the national wealth we should be spending on defence," he said. "We should urgently be asking: what capabilities do we really need to be sure that we're well insured in the future?"

What Jackson omits to mention, as he did when he made similar demands in August 2007 and in his 2006 Dimbleby Lecture (*Eyes passim*), is his own commercial interest in the matter. Since quitting the forces, Jackson has taken up directorships at Numis Securities and PA Consulting. The Numis website boasts that its "Aerospace & Defence team covers the whole UK sector within a global context. Over the past 17 years it has published a keynote detailed annual review of the sector and its constituent companies which is used by institutions, companies and the Ministry of Defence." PA, meanwhile, picked up £17m from the Ministry of Defence between 2004 and 2007 in consultancy work. More cash for defence spending would almost certainly mean more lolly for Numis and PA and, no doubt, trebles all round for Sir Mike.

MORE on the overlapping commercial and law-making interests of loquacious former health minister Lord (Norman) Warner.

Earlier this year the *Eye* (1204) reported Warner's fulsome contribution to the 8 November 2007 Queen's speech debate on the subject of health reform, in which he championed choice and competition with a mixed economy of providers in support of a proposed health and social care bill.

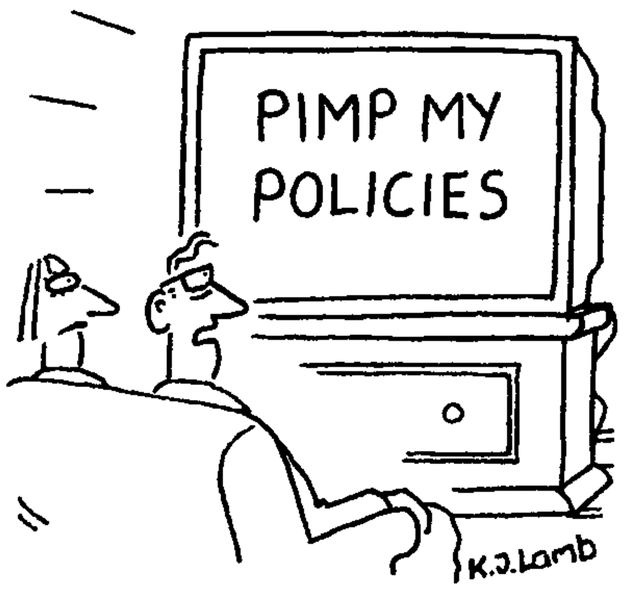
By a remarkable coincidence the same bill would benefit a number of companies for whom he had been cleared to work not long before.

When the *Eye* spotted that Warner had failed to declare these interests (at the same time dismissing doctors' opposing views as having "the whiff of self-interest"), it put the omission to the Lords privileges committee. Almost six months later the standards sub-committee headed by Lord Woolf has dismissed the complaint.

Why? Back came the helpful response: "Although it may happen from time to time, it is not the usual practice to give reasons when a complaint against a Member is dismissed. This is not out of a lack of courtesy to the complainant, but because reasonable persons can reasonably take different views of matters, and because it may be unfair to a Member to repeat and publicise the allegations against him, only to dismiss them." Warner didn't respond to the *Eye's* messages and calls in search of an explanation.

But it gets worse. Even after the *Eye* raised Warner's undeclared conflicts of interest, the peer continued to argue for the government health reforms during debates on the bill without mentioning them. Although he referred to his interests in the first debate on the bill, during six subsequent ones he failed to do so.

It is thought Lord Woolf's leniency so far might have been down to a more relaxed attitude to the wide-ranging Queen's speech debate. His reaction to similar failures when actually making legislation, and whether he deigns to explain it, remains to be seen.



"There's a touch of desperation about Gordon's latest relaunch"

NUMBER CRUNCHING

3 Members of Tony Blair's government who resigned in protest at illegality of war with Iraq

3 Members of Gordon Brown's government who have resigned in protest at him risking their future job prospects

EU-phemisms

They've agreed to ignore us and we've agreed to shut up

INQUISITIVE Lib Dems are wondering why the reputation of their shadow work and pensions minister, Paul Rowen, seems to matter far less to the party than that of his weightier forebear as MP for Rochdale, Sir Cyril Smith.

When the *New Statesman* revealed last month that Smith, 80, had been a shareholder in asbestos manufacturing giant, Turner & Newall – the company whose Rochdale plant was responsible for the deaths of thousands of his constituents – and that he had defended their products in the Commons in 1981 by reading out a speech written for him by the firm, the party leapt to his defence.

Rowen's office issued a statement claiming that Smith, "purchased the minimum amount of shares (in T&N) in order to speak at their AGM", that "people knew of the risks of working at the site" and "Labour and Conservative MPs at the time agreed with the line that Cyril was taking".

These claims are nonsense. When Smith purchased his T&N shares in 1982 he boasted that they were a good investment: "The fall in value of T&N shares was without rhyme or reason – so much so that I have today instructed my bankers to purchase some for me," he said at the time.

And far from workers knowing of the dangers, Dr Tim Goffe, a T&N medical officer, wrote in a memo to director Harry Hardie in 1983: "I thought the bad old days of suppression of reports and secrecy on health and safety matters were over. The overall impression is of cover-up."

As recently as 2 September this year Smith told the BBC's *North-west Tonight* programme: "There is no danger [from] asbestos to the public at large" – despite the fact that every year more than 4,000 people still die from asbestos-related diseases in the UK.

Meanwhile Rowen, whose maiden speech in the Commons concerned T&N's victims, has compromised his creditable reputation for asbestos campaigning. Why? Perhaps some clue can be found in the records of the Electoral Commission which show that half the donations made to Rochdale Liberal Democrats originate from the home address of, er, Sir Cyril Smith.

THE Forestry Commission's main role, according to its "mission statement", is "to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment". It also boasts of its commitment "to take action to reduce deforestation, restore forest cover and manage the world's forests on a sustainable basis". Splendid!

So why has the commission offered to help turn the 121-hectare, aptly-named Bintree forest in Norfolk into the largest gravel pit and landfill site in Europe? Er, money.

The destruction of Bintree will allow the extraction of 5,333,000 tonnes of minerals and the building of a concrete batching plant, an aggregate processing plant, a secondary aggregate recycling plant, an inert waste recycling plant and an inert waste landfill site – while putting millions in the Forestry Commission's coffers.

Simon Hodgson, commission chief executive, talks the talk about sustainable, climate-saving forestry; but when faced with making a quick buck or combating climate change, what's a guy gonna do?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The hysterical rhetoric of politicians attempting to ride the tiger of public opinion actually contributes to a rising fear of crime and a sense of societal breakdown."

– Consultation paper issued by Commission on English Prisons Today, presided over by Cherie Booth QC, 5 September 2008

"As a mother, I am deeply concerned that guns and knives are becoming a part of everyday life for some young people in Britain… I believe if we don't act – now – then the implications are serious for our future individual safety, community wellbeing and our society."

– Newspaper article plugging Cherie Booth's appearance on Channel 4's Street Weapons Commission *programme, 6 July 2008*

POLICE 5

WITH the Met in turmoil over race discrimination cases, it's not a good time for the police's national personnel chief to have been slammed by a judge for actively condoning serious racial discrimination in her old job.

As "chief people officer" at the National Policing Improvement Agency, Angela O'Connor is the head of police HR staff in England and Wales, setting national policy on recruitment and promotion. But in her previous job as director of human resources at the crown prosecution service (CPS), she played a key role in a case which this month resulted in a £600,000 pay out to an Asian lawyer who was falsely accused of inciting a race riot.

Halima Aziz was suspended from her job at Bradford crown court in 2001. An investigation in 2002 found that allegations made by a security guard that the lawyer had sparked a fight between white and Asian youths at the court were entirely untrue. Despite tensions running high after a summer of racial violence in the city, Aziz's bosses didn't even pick up a phone to check whether there had been any kind of disturbance at the court (there hadn't) before suspending her pending a formal investigation.

Employment judge Dr I. Watt singled out O'Connor for criticism several times in the judgment, for expressly and actively "condoning acts of serious discrimination". The treatment of Ms Aziz was described as "indefensible".

SALMOND STAKES

HOW much longer will Alex Salmond be able to convince the Scottish press and people that he's not a grubby nationalist who fans sectarian hatreds, but a modern politician leading Scotland to a tolerant future? A scandal is looming north of the border that threatens to tarnish the oily one's gleaming image perhaps irrevocably.

Last month the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations condemned Salmond's government for giving £400,000 to the Scottish Islamic Foundation. The foundation is headed by one Osama Saeed, who just happens to be the Scottish National Party's parliamentary candidate in Glasgow Central. As Stephen Maxwell, the council's director, said, it was "unusual, to say the least" that public money was handed over to a body which had neither been incorporated as a company nor registered as a charity at the time the grant was given.

As Labour and Liberal Democrat members of the Scottish parliament push for an inquiry, they would do well to listen to the Scottish Muslim groups which Salmond *won't* fund. They say the Scottish Islamic Foundation does not represent their or any other tolerant version of Islam.

Saeed's membership of the SNP is not his only interesting connection. His Islamic Foundation is in fact a front organisation for the Muslim Brotherhood which wants to create a global Caliphate (motto: "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. The Qur'an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.") Saeed is an enthusiastic supporter and was furious when Nicky Campbell of BBC Radio 5 accurately reported that Yusuf al-Qaradawi, spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, had ruled that wife beating and female circumcision were fine, and that gays, Israelis and apostates deserved death. "This is truly unacceptable from the BBC," Saeed declared.

The Brotherhood's main aim in Scotland is to establish Muslim faith schools, controlled by Saeed's allies, naturally. At the launch of the Scottish Islamic Foundation, Saeed praised Muslim schools in England where children are taught the Koran, boys and girls are segregated and the latter wear the hijab. Salmond stood beside him and pledged state funding.

Amanullah de Sondy, a lecturer in Islamic studies at Glasgow University, believes faith schools "will further reinforce isolationist approaches to education and hamper attempts at building bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims", and says: "I have nothing against the Scottish Islamic Foundation... but they are not representative of the Muslim community." But Salmond didn't listen. He seems to want to make the Scottish Islamic Foundation / Muslim Brotherhood the authentic voice of Scottish Islam, in the hope that it will return the favour by helping the SNP take Muslim votes from Labour.

The Kelvinside numpties who control BBC Scotland are equally impressed and have also been flirting with radical Islamic chic. About the only Muslim voices they allow listeners to hear are those of Saeed and Aamer Anwar, a solicitor and former Socialist Workers' Party activist who was nearly done for contempt of court after he claimed that a wannabe-terrorist, convicted of possessing CDs and videos of guerrilla tactics and bomb-making, was just "doing what millions of young people do every day – looking for answers on the internet".

So large has the Muslim Brotherhood influence grown in Scottish politics and broadcasting that the high commissioner for Pakistan, Dr Maleha Lodhi, used a speech at Glasgow University last year to urge Scottish Muslims to speak up for themselves and not allow the men with the loudest voices to be seen as their sole representatives.

Some hope. As Salmond dreams of becoming the first ruler of an independent Scotland in three centuries, the bonds between nationalism and Islamism are growing tighter. He is talking of putting representatives of the Scottish Islamic Foundation on to commissions investigating the future of Trident and sending them as ambassadors to the Middle East. As for those Scots, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, who don't believe in sexual segregation and the theology of al-Qaradawi, Salmond is riding so high in the polls he thinks he can tell them to get stuffed.

'Ratbiter'

TV

The Family (C4)

THE difference between a remake and a homage has bought many lawyers big houses in the Hollywood hills and now, less lucratively, will exercise TV viewers and reviewers.

A new Channel 4 series in which the Hughes family of Canterbury agreed to be filmed while doing everything except screwing and using the loo has exactly the same title and modus operandi as Paul Watson's celebrated 1974 series on BBC1, in which the Wilkins clan of Reading became the spiritual grandparents of all the deadbeats and wannabes who have trooped through reality TV shows since. The makers of the new show have also made liberal references to the old one in publicity material. Yet, curiously, the opening voiceover each week describes the series as "unprecedented", which is surely the one thing it can never be.

As it turns out, the precedents are the problem. Watson's documentary was screened in a period when the only non-celebrities to be found in peaktime were quiz-show contestants. The sheer freshness of the form both for participants and audience meant that Watson filmed scenes that felt very like real life, although he had admittedly taken the insurance of using a family who, though resembling the Waltons by contemporary standards, were notably dysfunctional for the time, able to offer, for example, the on-air revelation that one of the children resulted from an affair.

Almost 35 years later, those on both sides of the screen know too much. Ever since *The Office*, there has been a fashion in telly for comedies and dramas that uninitiated viewers might take as *vérité*. The 2008 version of **The Family**, unfortunately brings off the opposite trick.

Watching the Hugheses as they sit in their overlit kitchen exchanging stilted conversation about the gig the teenager has been to the previous night, a viewer might easily conclude that they were watching a spin-off from the sitcom *My Family* in which the scriptwriters had found the gags especially hard to come by. Even the opening narration tweely refers to "four kids and a cat [long arch pause], Ziggy", setting a tone more reminiscent of *The Partridge Family* than *The Family*.

The Wilkinses, media-illiterates like most of the population back then, often seemed genuinely to forget that the cameras were present. Their contemporary counterparts, however, most resemble politicians being filmed relaxing at home for a party election broadcast. You sense they are aware of every camera angle and are weighing the consequences of every statement.

In 1974, we used to worry about TV exploiting people. Now the bigger risk is people exploiting TV. Though the producers might congratulate themselves on getting the teenage daughter to behave like a spoilt brat, an alternative interpretation would be that she has watched enough *Big Brother* to understand that tantrums are the best way of standing out on television.

Adding to the artificiality is the decision to impose a narrative on each episode, as a sitcom would. So programme one is called "Life Begins at Forty" and centres on the depression that Jane Hughes feels as she approaches a landmark anniversary. The air of contrivance is increased by every production decision.

When we see Jane and hubby Simon whispering in the dark, as he reassures her that 40 isn't so awful, we know that they must know they are being recorded for a short time before the cameras are switched off to leave them to sleep or sex. Even in the wretched state TV has reached, it's unimaginable that they would have been filmed secretly throughout the night and then this single scene extracted.

The show also uses, as voiceovers, interviews recorded with the family members. "Mum's really depressed at the moment and I don't know why," says the young boy, but you suspect that he does know and you wonder why, if he doesn't, he can't ask. But, revealingly, it's exactly the kind of voiceover you would have on a drama about a middle-class woman who's scared of hitting 40.

In a multichannel, maxi-platform environment, TV is desperate to find material that the audience recognises from the start: hence so many period dramas, sequels, remakes and recap documentaries. Channel 4's *The Family*, though, is a very odd beast: a sequel and catch-up doc that uses a different family, a different director and a different filming method, keeping only the title. Ironically, given its name and subject matter, *The Family* proves to be completely unrelated.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

HAVING had its *Undercover Mosque* documentary vindicated by Ofcom, Channel 4 broadcast a sequel a couple of weeks ago – much to the fury of George Galloway MP. The film's executive producer David Henshaw was summoned to explain himself on Galloway's weekly current affairs show *The Real Deal* (sic) on Press TV, which is funded by the Iranian government.

Alas, there were few opportunities for explaining, as Gorgeous George spent much of the programme hurling abuse at his guest, whom he accused of ignoring Christian and Jewish fundamentalism. Henshaw replied that he'd be happy to make a similar film about fanatical rabbis or vicars. Could Galloway name any who called for the murder of homosexuals and adulterers, as Islamist preachers had in his programme?

Galloway refused to answer. "This hooligan will have to be thrown out of this studio," he yelled at the camera, "if he doesn't stop shouting at me!" But Henshaw wasn't shouting. He was committing a far worse crime: laughing at the spectacle of the Hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Bow going tonto.

After the recording Henshaw went to shake Galloway's hand. "Fuck off!" the great man bellowed, trembling with rage.

PS: Before going on air with his Press TV programmes, Galloway undertakes a peculiar pumping-up regime – a sort of combination of heavy breathing and Japanese style calisthenics. Can this be wise for a man of his age?

GOING LIVE

LIVE now for the latest on Hurricane Ike as it bowls towards Texas.

Mark Longhurst from Sky News has an interview with Jamie Rhome from the US National Hurricane Centre: "Jamie, I've a simple question. What's it like where you are?" asks Longhurst.

"Well, I'm in Miami, so things are quite nice, actually," replies the weatherman.

THE BBC's rebuttal of "misleading" figures obtained by the Lib Dems under the freedom of information act, revealing that the Beeb spent £10.4m on air fares in the last financial year, is itself a mission to mislead.

"Using a crude measure, if you divide £10.4m by 25,000 staff (BBC Worldwide's non-licence-fee spending was included), you get £416 per head": just over 400 quid if you count all the caterers, researchers, office workers and cleaners, the majority of whom only ever leave the ground courtesy of one of Mr Otis's lifts.

"Who begrudges Huw Edwards a business-class flight to Beijing, given the antisocial hours and back-and-forth schedule he was working during the Olympics?" asks the BBC.

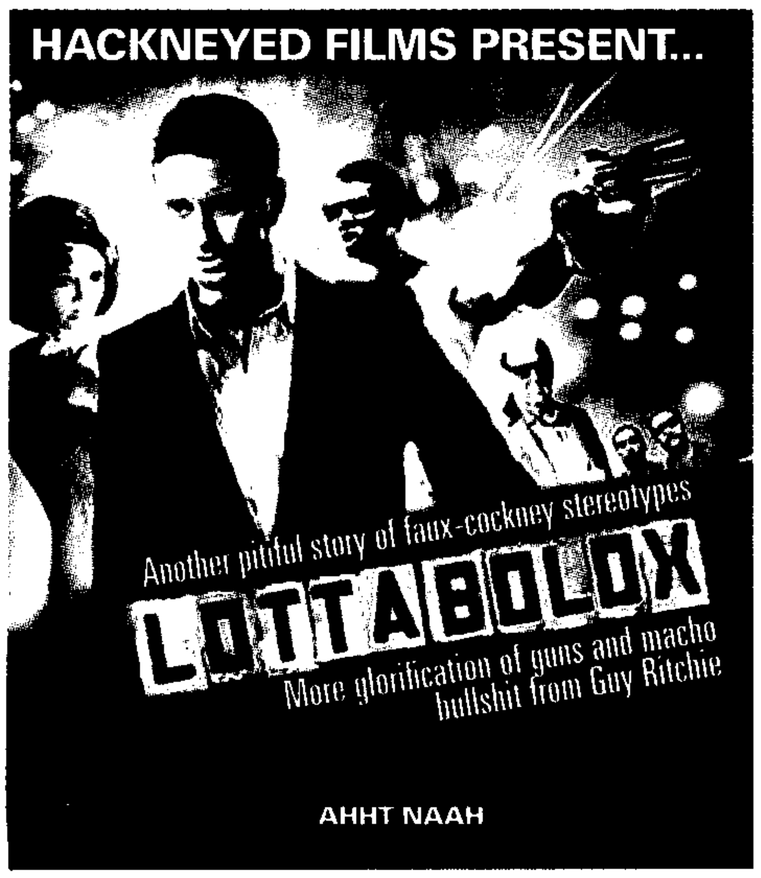
The crews who work the same hours but have to go cattle-class with all their kit and the licence-payers who funded his pointless trip to anchor the news from London in front of the Bird's Nest may have an answer to that question.

For the purposes of the rebuttal, Edwards is described as "flying talent", which makes further explanation of his eligibility for a string of luxury benefits unnecessary.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£139.50 Fee Noel Edmonds is refusing to pay BBC for TV licence in protest at it "badgering, hectoring and threatening people"

£1,800,000 Fee BBC paid Noel Edmonds not to make any more Noel's House Party after ratings crumbled before the end of his contract


HACKNEYED FILMS PRESENT...
Another pitiful story of faux-cockney stereotypes
LOTTABOLOX
More glorification of guns and macho bullshit from Guy Ritchie
AHHT NAAH

ONE of the loudest voices calling for Prof Michael Reiss to lose his Royal Society job for saying that science teachers should, sometimes, be willing to discuss creationism in class was outspoken atheist Prof Richard Dawkins. No surprise there.

But what's this? In *The Genius of Charles Darwin*, shown on TV in August, Dawkins can be found discussing creationism with, er, a science class. The scientist took a group of 15 and 16 year olds for a class on evolution at Park High School in Stanmore. And he could be seen engaging with a pupil talking about his faith. So it's okay to waste science time discussing creationism… so long as you're doing it on the telly?

VIEWERS of BBC News are getting used to a growing number of technical problems in bulletins, including loss of sound during live reports, late fades into studio items and missing pictures and sound in packages.

Now BBC managers have noticed "significant on-air mistakes marring our output" as well. Mystified by the cause, head of presentation (News) Mike Kavanagh emailed staff, asking them to identify the reason.

Helpful colleagues have reminded him that it's the fault of senior managers who made so many technicians redundant when News 24 and BBC1's output were merged, forcing them to spend much longer hours on air with little preparation time and no possibility of rehearsals.

What mystifies the remaining techies is that they warned managers about this four months ago yet nothing has been done.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: The National Assembly for Wales is based in which city?

Contestant: Cork.

AR: Wainwright's coast-to-coast walk crosses three national parks. The North York Moors, the Yorkshire Dales and which other?

Contestant: The Black Forest.

AR: In which locality do the rivers Styx and Lethe flow, Hell or Halifax?

Contestant *(after asking for question to be repeated and then thinking for a while)*: Halifax.

AR: Which English queen rode a chariot with knives on the wheels?

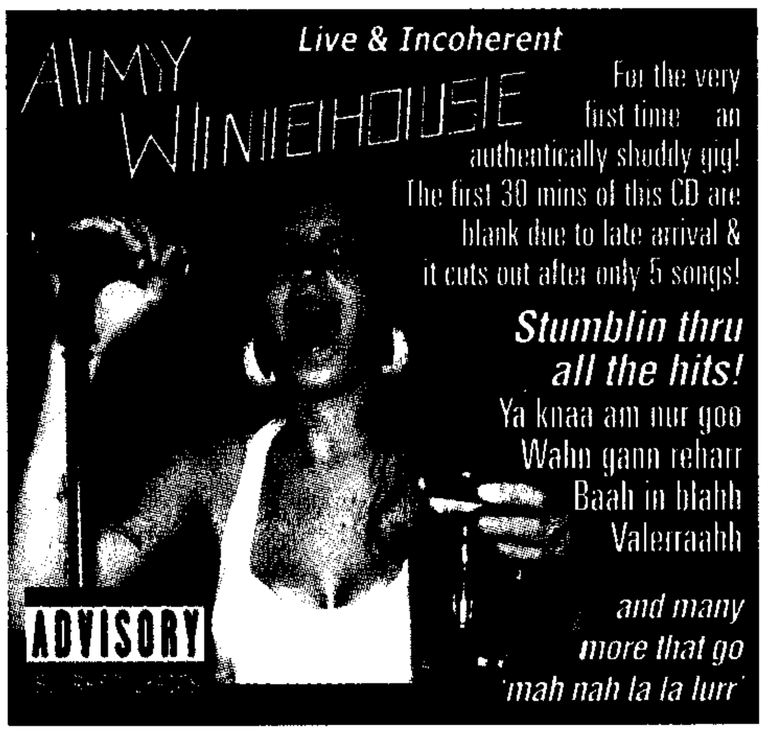
Contestant *(full of confidence)*: Victoria!

WHEN "family-friendly" employer the BBC announced the end of its in-house childcare service in 2006 (to save £1m a year), the corporation promised the *Eye* that a carefully phased programme of closure would "offer parents sufficient time to find alternative nurseries".

Parents and broadcasting union BECTU campaigned to save the nurseries and in 2007 there was good news for some: the not-for-profit organisation that ran the BBC's Macklin Street nursery in central London, mostly used by World Service staff, wanted to take it over fully and keep it going.

Then, late last month while many families were still away on holiday, parents received a message from Childcare Enterprises telling them that on the very brink of signing the lease, the company had received information from the BBC "which makes the financial viability and therefore the sustainability of the Nursery untenable". Even though this was the kind of detail that should have been sorted out months earlier, the service would close just a few days later, on 29 August, leaving kids with nowhere to go.

While mystified and panicked parents tried to find out what was going on, the BBC agreed to extend its contract at Macklin Street for just one extra month to allow staff to make alternative childcare arrangements.


Live & Incoherent
AMY WINEHOUSE
For the very first time an authentically shoddy gig! The first 30 mins of this CD are blank due to late arrival & it cuts out after only 5 songs!
Stumblin thru all the hits!
Ya knaa am nur goo
Wahn gann reharr
Baah in blahh
Valerraahh
and many more that go 'mah nah la la lurr'
ADVISORY

THE news that the first lady of France, Carla Bruni, was to make her performing debut on the BBC show *Later with Jools Holland* infuriated James McMahon from music rag *NME*, who vented his spleen in the *Independent*.

"As somebody who cares deeply about the power of rock and roll, I think it's disgusting," he pouted. "I've always been of the belief that rock and roll is supposed to be anti-authoritarian and about kicking up a fuss, not about cosying up to the establishment."

That would be the same James McMahon who has recently devoted much time to grovelling to the PR representatives of the Killers after rewriting an *NME* interview he had done with the band for the self-same *Independent* without their authorisation.

And the same McMahon who changed his byline from the rather more rock 'n' roll James Jam after being promoted to features editor at the *NME*, which is owned by the deeply non-conformist global media corporation, Time Warner Inc.

AD NAUSEAM

***WHOOPS!* Asda's latest big booze offer is three bottles of wine for £10, backed by a TV spot with Mungo Jerry's "In the Summertime" playing in the background.**

Presumably Asda's agency Fallon is such a hive of go-getting striplings that no one there knows that the very same music was used for the government's 2000 anti drink-driving campaign. If a pub chain, car company and local A&E ever use the song too, the circle of cant will be complete.

THE department for work and pensions (DWP) needs your help. It has £6m to spend on a campaign to cut long-term unemployment, but isn't sure what to do with it.

"My holy grail is to come up with an 'Every little helps'," said Sue Garrard, the DWP's director of communications. What she's after is a big idea, something like the Tesco slogan she mentions or the DoH's "5-a-day" fruit and veg campaign.

One way to get people back to work might be to use the £6m advertising budget and offer it as a fillip to the newly employed, rather than wasting it on the admen and catchphrases.

Or some of the money could be given to another bit of Whitehall, the Central Office of Information (COI), one of whose current challenges is to "build public support for wind energy and to allay some of the fears/myths associated with wind energy (wind turbines spoil the landscape, wind turbines are noisy, wind turbines produce limited power, wind turbines are a health hazard)".

The COI is canvassing help from PR agencies in the environmental field, but it only has £200,000 to spend. Funding a windy mass consumer education campaign for such a paltry sum will certainly require lashings of hot air.

LUVVIES

"It just happens that I'm acting because I'm in the process of meeting someone – myself – on the way back."

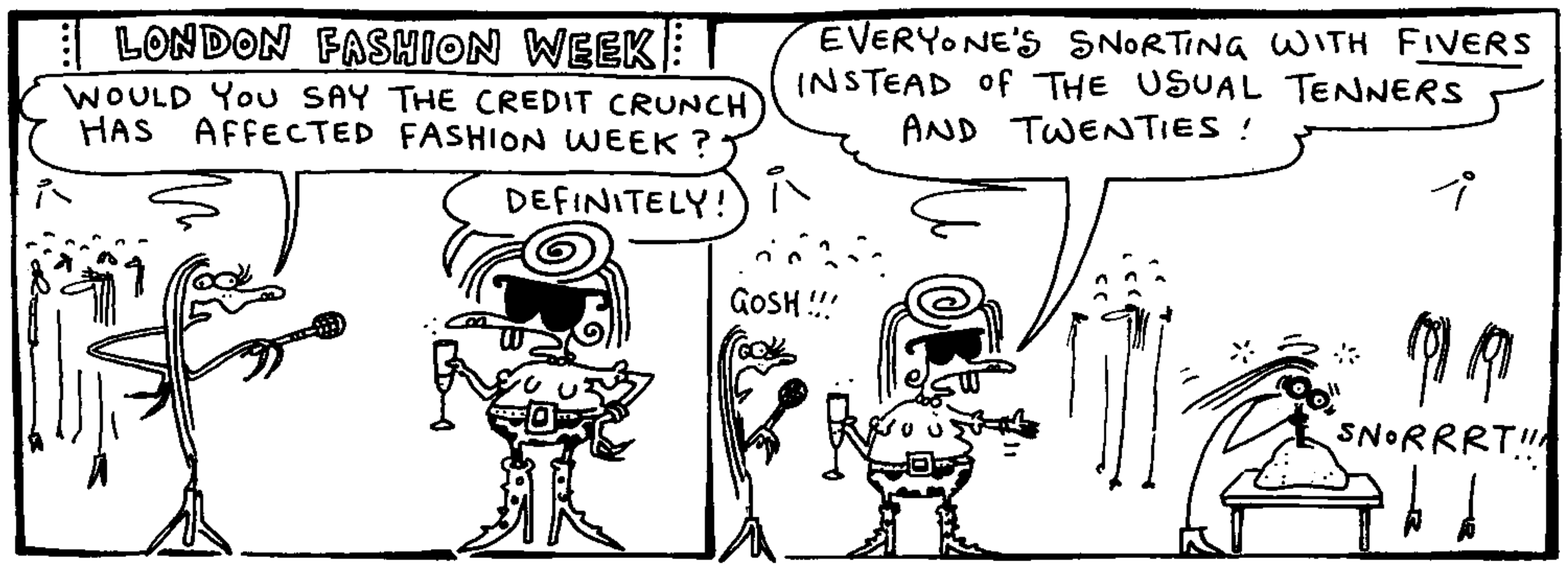
JULIETTE BINOCHE,
***The Globe and Mail*, Canada**

Submitted by Brendan J. O'Byrne.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


LONDON FASHION WEEK
WOULD YOU SAY THE CREDIT CRUNCH HAS AFFECTED FASHION WEEK?
DEFINITELY!
EVERYONE'S SNORTING WITH FIVERS INSTEAD OF THE USUAL TENNERS AND TWENTIES!
GOSH!!!
SNORRRT!!!

In The Courts

THE recently exposed £30bn black hole in the Court Service budget wasn't helped by a bumper pay-off last year for chief executive Sir Ron De Witt when he was moved out over a series of missed performance targets.

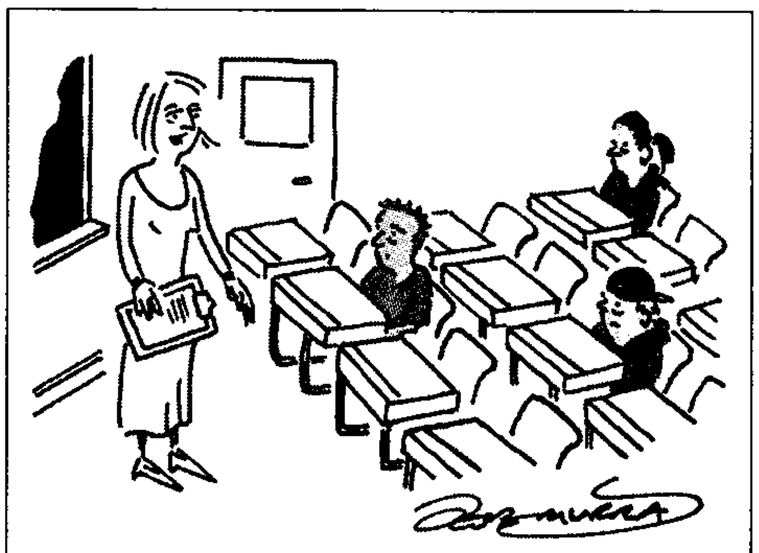
The ministry of justice's (MoJ) latest accounts show that Sir Ron received a "lump sum compensation payment" of £405k-£410k, including a "special severance payment" of £130k-135k, to soften the blow.

Now an insider tells the *Eye* that, after De Witt had pocketed the cash, officials discovered his compensation had been overpaid by £85,000. Instead of demanding the money back (how embarrassing!), the MoJ asked the Treasury if the sum could simply be written off. Yes, came the reply – but only if the error was kept out of the department's accounts and any questions about it under freedom of information laws were blocked.

Asked to confirm the unusual case of a *miscalculated* "reward for failure", the MoJ would only say: "We are unable to comment as this information is confidential." Not much of a denial, and not the sort of response the National Audit Office ought to accept.

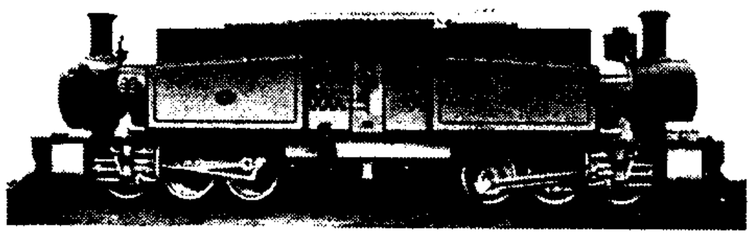
● The courts' financial predicament represents Gordon Brown's four-year-old "efficiency programme" in action. The main reason for the shortfall, admit Court Service officials, is that "HM Revenue and Customs, who were our biggest customer, have reduced their use of magistrates' courts to retrieve unpaid taxes".

HMRC's reluctance to go to the courts for lost tax is caused by the loss of around 1,000 tax collectors as part of 25,000 job cuts under the efficiency programme, which have left the taxman unable to pursue anything but larger debts over £20,000: an obvious false economy in the first place. Now, through knock-on effects in the courts that are likely to include redundancies and reduced court-sitting time, the administration of justice is set to suffer too. Another triumph for Gordon!



"It's good to see so many of you survived the holidays"

SIGNAL FAILURES



Early doors

THE rail industry has had enough of passengers spoiling the punctuality statistics.

Last month an Arriva CrossCountry (ACC) train to Birmingham left behind a woman in a wheelchair at Leicestershire's Melton Mowbray station, which is managed by East Midlands Trains. She said staff told her the train was two minutes late so there wasn't time to fetch the wheelchair ramp.

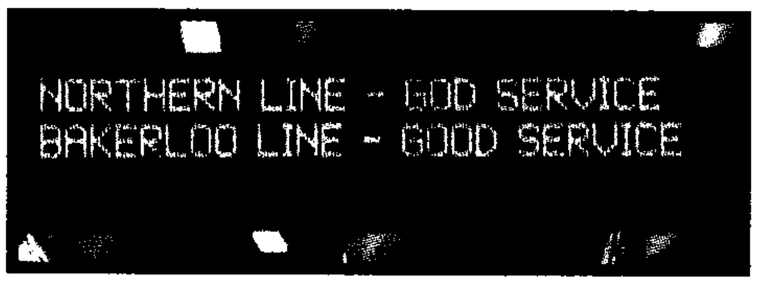
Every second of delay matters when passengers are boarding, of course – but it doesn't count when train punctuality statistics are being collected. Then lateness is ignored at stations along a route and is only counted at the designated terminus – where trains are deemed to have arrived "on time" even if they are five minutes late (or 10 minutes for intercity trains). Most ACC trains from Melton Mowbray are said to take 18 minutes on the last leg from Coleshill to Birmingham, but the actual journey time, as taken by the same trains going the other way, is 13 minutes.

The woman's experience was exceptional, and EMT apologised. But the staff's behaviour reflects the culture of an industry that allows late trains to skip stations or turn back early (*Eye* 1178), delaying passengers but boosting the punctuality statistics. "Punctuality is better than ever," rail minister Tom Harris has boasted. "For the first time, 90 percent of passenger trains arrived on time – a landmark achievement certainly well worth celebrating." Yeah, right.

The latest wheeze across the network is shutting train doors early. Last month the department for transport (DafT) was asked what operational guidance it gives its franchisees about this. None, was the answer: "Different standards for train despatch are employed throughout the rail industry." Although DafT specifies timetables and rolling stock in detail, it can't be bothered to standardise things that confuse passengers (including time restrictions on tickets – see last *Eye*).

"Train operators have shown due diligence in putting up appropriate station publicity, giving notice to passengers of the period of time whereby train doors will be closed, generally at least 30 seconds before the departure time," said DafT. "The published departure time… is the time when the train should leave the location. To ensure that punctuality is maintained, rail operators must therefore assume that passengers will turn up in sufficient time before that to purchase tickets and get on to the appropriate platform to board the train for safe and secure departure, providing the train and passengers with the best possible opportunity to arrive at the next location on time."

So while trains are "on time" if they finish their journey five or 10 minutes late, passengers are late if they arrive 30 seconds *before* departure. Connecting from one train to another can be even more fraught. Passengers can arrive on a train that's several minutes late and dash to a connecting train seconds before departure time, only to find the train doors already shut. Years ago connecting trains would usually wait for delayed passengers but now the train statistics are far too important for that.



Submitted by Ian Docwra

THERE was excitement last week when Air France confirmed plans for London-Paris trains on the new track through Kent, using French utility Veolia as its train operator.

Kent residents might be less impressed when they learn that Veolia was formerly Connex – which made such a mess of its two English rail franchises that even New Labour (famously tolerant of pisspoor private contractors) booted it out.

BRITISH Rail's intercity CrossCountry trains, linking places as far apart as Penzance and Aberdeen, had bags of space for bicycles and luggage. But Virgin dumped them for new Voyager trains with just four bike spaces each – not enough for long-distance trains with high numbers of leisure travellers.

Last year Arriva took over. Its response to the shortage of bike spaces? To halve them to create room for a refreshment trolley, which replaces the onboard shop so Arriva can cram in even more seats.

'Dr B. Ching'

Down on the Farm

FOR generations one of the traditional occasions which help to alleviate the often lonely business of farming has been the local agricultural show. There are still scores of these up and down the country, looked forward to each year by farming families and the rural community in general as a chance to socialise, look over each other's livestock and produce and generally enjoy the fun of the fair.

But if farmers enjoy these get-togethers, so also do their prime persecutors, the ever-growing army of regulatory officials, who often regard these shows as a challenge to their ingenuity in devising new ways to make their victims' lives miserable.

Some of the officials' antics have become legendary. There was the West Country show, for example, where the attention of fire officers was caught by an open-sided tent, put up by organisers to provide shelter in the event of rain. The officials solemnly observed that, by their reading of the new regulations, this tent, open to the air on all sides, was not compliant because it did not have "fire doors". Unless the organisers erected suitably designated doors on one side of the tent, the structure could not be officially approved.

Then there was the year when the Royal Bath and West Show was told by safety officials that its main show ring, in which cattle were led round in front of the crowd, posed a danger to the public because the animals were only separated from the audience by a stout rope. This would have to be replaced by a metal crash barrier, at a cost of £40,000, even though past experience had shown that stampeding animals could do serious damage charging at such unyielding objects.

This year the prize goes to officials of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs snooping around the Glendale show near Wooler in Northumberland, who saw a number of tractors being driven by local farmers who had volunteered their services, free of charge, to help get the showground ready. What concerned these zealous servants of the crown was whether the tractors were using "red diesel", the special fuel containing a red dye, which is sold to farmers for agricultural purposes at a much lower than normal rate of duty (meaning that currently farmers pay just over half the 123p a litre charged to the general public).

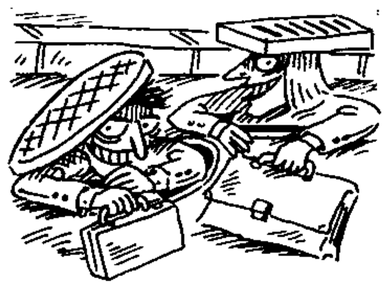
When the offending farmers were told to drain their tanks and refill with diesel taxed at the full rate, the show's organisers protested that the tractors were being used for an agricultural purpose, as the law allows. The HMRC could not accept this. The tax concession, it insisted, is only given "to support the production of food in the agricultural and horticultural sector. An agricultural show is not an agricultural enterprise as such, but a profit-making business outside the scheme".

The show's secretary, Sarah Nelson, pointed out that the purpose of the show was not to make a profit but to benefit the local agricultural community, and that the farmers were not receiving any payment for their services. But the officials remained adamant. The organisers realised that the only way to challenge this ruling would be to go to court at a far greater cost than they could afford out of the show's modest income. Reluctantly they bowed to the inevitable, borrowing a single tractor which was then filled with conventional law-abiding fuel. Game, set and match again to the officials.

'Muckspreader'

"Now you can eat meat with a clear conscience!"

ROTTEN BOROUGHS



TRIBAL AREA

CONGRATULATIONS to Tower Hamlets' new assistant chief executive, Lutfur Rahman Ali. The "diversity" guru becomes No 2 on the council and its highest-ranking Bangladeshi officer, on £125,000-plus a year. The only fly in the ointment is Tory opposition leader Cllr Peter Golds, who has made a formal complaint to the Standards Board for England about the selection process.

Even the headhunters hired by the council had doubts about Ali's suitability, declaring him a "marginal" candidate. But new Labour council leader Lutfur Rahman (no relation) thought differently and added him to the shortlist. Four members of the seven-strong selection panel duly voted that he get the job. All four happened to be Bengalis and fellow bigwigs at the East London Mosque – council leader Lutfur Rahman, his deputy Siraj Islam, Ohid Ahmed and local "Respeck" leader Abjol Miah.

The problem is a little forgetfulness on Ali's part over his CV. In 2002 he was elected a Labour councillor in Tower Hamlets. But he was forced to resign after just six days, causing a by-election, when Labour realised that his job as diversity supremo at the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority was a politically restricted post. That incident seems to have slipped Ali's mind when it came to filling in his job application form. On his CV it stated that he left his post at the fire authority in July 2001 – nearly a year *before* the annulled election. That, he told the panel, was a "typo". After losing his fire authority job Ali made a new career as a "diversity" consultant, working for Tribal Group, which includes Tower Hamlets council among its clients. A close council cabinet colleague of the appointments committee members is Cllr Abdal Ullah, who also, by an amazing coincidence, works for Tribal Group as "strategic co-ordinator for Muslim employment and enterprise". Just fancy that!

The standards board has told Cllr Golds it's up to the council to investigate. So it looks likely that the first glittering achievement of newish town hall leader Lutfur Rahman (still no relation) will remain in place, keeping the mosque's powerful vote-movers and shakers happy.

● **FOR almost a year, tenants on the Yorke estate in Newark, Nottinghamshire, have been badgering the "arm's length management organisation" (Almo) which runs their estate to clean the streets, get rid of graffiti and tidy up. But to no avail.**

Then, to their amazement, over August bank holiday weekend roadsweepers appeared, staff trooped across the estate picking up rubbish and emptying bins, strimmers annihilated weeds and graffiti was scrubbed from walls. Astonished tenants even witnessed a manager on his hands and knees, repainting street signs.

All became clear when it was revealed that an inspection by the Audit Commission was imminent. For the Almo, Newark and Sherwood Homes, to keep its two-star ("good") rating and justify fat cat salaries, everything has to be spick and span. Until the inspectors have departed, anyway.

QUAY FACTS

SALFORD city council is getting excited about the city's wannabe status as the creative epicentre of Britain [*can this be right?* Ed]. With the BBC relocation, and digital industries coming to "Manchester's waterfront" [*sic*], the council has been boasting that MediaCityUK [*sic*] will deliver "employment opportunities for 15,500 people". That figure has frequently been quoted to Salford's long-suffering community as millions of pounds of public money are poured in to support the Peel Holdings-led project.

One tiny problem is that most of the jobs are relocated ones. Pressed by the community newspaper *Salford Star*, the Central Salford Urban Regeneration Company admitted that Salford itself will only get "approximately 3,250 net additional jobs". Er, maybe.

● **MEANWHILE to underline Salford's status in the "creative economy" [*sic*], the council is sinking £99,000 into the 2009 Manchester International Festival. The wad will go to commission a new work by Cuban ballet star Carlos Acosta which will launch at the Lowry Centre, accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic.**

Last year Salford council gave the Manc Fest £165,000. In return Salfordians got a free pop concert on the Quays plus discounts on tickets to see Acosta. This time, however, it appears residents are getting nowt. Instead, according to a council report, "an agreed number of tickets would be provided at both the Lowry and Sadler's Wells for Salford city council's hospitality purposes". In other words, for councillors and their mates.

MUCKY DUCK

DESPERATE measures by bosses at the Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) who want to sell their 420-acre Kingsway Business Park to sceptical locals – a "lucky duck" stand which offered entry into a prize draw to win £50-worth of high street shopping vouchers.

Entrants were asked to "hook-a-duck" and answer multiple-choice questions about the benefits and job opportunities at the park. One small problem – there aren't any!

Claims that Kingsway would secure £300m in private investment from businesses and host 7,250 jobs have proved to be nothing short of *un canard*. Instead, three years and £30m of public money on, Kingsway remains a muddy field, one corner of which contains large metal sheds. So far only one medium-sized enterprise has moved in. Plans for a hotel on the site fell through.

The RDA has form. In February it announced the opening of a £1.8m office block – sorry, "local enterprise zone" – called Lock 50. Alas, RDA could find not a single interested business, so they moved in themselves. Lucky ducks!

BOB-A-JOB

STRONGLY tipped for the "turncoats of the year" category in the 2008 Rotten Boroughs awards are husband-and-wife team Bob and Penny Hedgeland, who represent the Leatherhead North ward of Mole district council in Surrey.

Barrister Penny was elected to the council as a Tory in 2006. A few weeks after her election, however, Penny declared she didn't share Call Me Dave's vision and jumped ship to the Lib Dems.

In May this year, husband Bob joined Penny on the council, also as a Lib Dem, but then both decided they didn't like the Lib Dems any more and declared themselves independent councillors. Now they have gone one better and formed their own political party: the "Leatherhead Independent Group".

Following a fierce leadership contest between the two, Bob emerged victorious. All this makes Bob a happy man as he gets to trouser the special responsibility allowance that goes with being a "party leader" in Mole Valley: £512.50. Don't spend it all at once, Bob!

● **ONE thing that riles residents of the London Borough of Richmond who have objected to the extension of a controlled parking zone (CPZ) into the St Margarets area is that, they claim, the consultation process has been flawed. What could have given them that idea? Possibly because in a previous consultation about a CPZ in Teddington the council sent out letters to a number of inanimate objects, including a bus shelter and a row of recycling bins, to ask for their opinions.**

Cllr James Mumford tells the *Eye* that on the council's "inclusive" database empty plots of land are frequently registered as residents in need of consultation. That is, perhaps, taking inclusiveness too far.

DATA DUNCES

WITH the government's history of losing highly sensitive confidential data (relating to child benefit recipients, prisoners, defence workers, drivers, etc), you would think it might take every precaution to ensure the security of the new ContactPoint, a database of every child in the country, before it goes online in January.

But no. With more than 300,000 civil servants having access to ContactPoint – designed to protect children at risk of abuse, social exclusion and deprivation – the database has already been criticised for having the potential to put children at risk of stalkers, abusive parents and paedophiles.

Thus the department for children, schools and families (DCSF) has said that for especially vulnerable children – say, those of politicians, celebrities, those on witness protection schemes or removed from abusive parents – certain information will be shielded or withheld and a special order required before it can be accessed. For everyone else it will be down to our local authorities to ensure that sensitive information is shielded.

With many parents and council employees unaware of the scheme and of the need to protect vulnerable children, there is a serious question over not only when the £224m database will come into force, but whether it will be safe enough not to turn into another data disaster.

But try ringing your local council to find out how you might protect sensitive cases, and in the majority this is what happens: "Er, ContactPoint? That's, um, let's try Adult Social Care." Pause. "No. Never heard of it." Or: "Sorry. You could try Education." Or: "Don't think that's us. Just racking my brains. No. Sorry."

This doesn't bode well.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

RISING FOOD PRICES ARE THE SHARP END OF THE CREDIT CRUNCH
THE BASICS OF FAMILY LIFE BEING PRICED TO THE EXTREME... IT'S A CRIME!
HOW DO YOU LOOK INTO A CHILD'S EYES AND SAY THAT THERE WILL BE NO RICOTTA BAKE, STAR FRUIT SMOOTHIE OR PIEMONTE GORGONZOLA FOR SUPPER?
WITH THE HEAVIEST OF HEARTS, JEZ...

NOOKS and CORNERS

THREE years ago, in *Eye* 1133, I described a curious case of what Sir John Betjeman used to call "Antiquarian Prejudice" in the Outer Hebrides. A trust set up in 2000 to restore the 14th century ruin of St Columba's Church at Uidh, near Stornoway, as a heritage centre and for community use was being thwarted by Historic Scotland's blinkered refusal to permit a roof being raised over the decaying walls.

In the event, Historic Scotland changed its mind and gave £275,000 towards the £510,000 estimated cost: so far, so good. The trust, Urras Eaglais na H-Aoidhe, then set about raising the rest of the money and applied to the heritage lottery fund (HLF). The HLF then asked the trust to withdraw the application and "refresh" the feasibility study, the conservation plan, the archaeological survey, the engineering study of the structure and the ground condition survey and also provide an "audience development plan", a "training plan" and an "access plan and audit". To process this further paperwork, the HLF together with the local authority gave a grant of £22,000.

All this was done and a new application submitted last April with some confidence. Alas, the HLF has just decided to reject it. For while the "potential benefits" of the project are recognised, "the information provided does not demonstrate that the trust has fully understood the requirements for the management of the project and, later, for the viable operation of the proposed Ecclesiastical Heritage Centre". What sophisticated "management structure" would be required for a small country church on the coast of a remote Scottish island which may be used for the occasional wedding, funeral or concert is difficult to conceive. As far as the trust is concerned, eight years and some £40,000 of public money has been wasted on futile paperwork and bureaucracy, with the initial public goodwill near exhausted, and this important ancient building, although consolidated, still threatened.

Of course the alleged lack of detailed information is not the real reason this modest grant application has been turned down. It is because the HLF's budget, like English Heritage's and many others, is being squeezed so that more and more money can be redirected into the giant maw of the London 2012 Olympics. It will greatly console the people of Lewis that their ancient ruined chapel will remain roofless and useless for the good of the nation – so that builders and architects can make a killing to allow a few athletes to perform in front of TV cameras at an ephemeral event in Hackney. Such is culture under Labour.

IT IS a truism, of course, that money can always be found for something pointless or pernicious. A good example is to be found in Aberdeen, where it is proposed to dig up Union Terrace Gardens to create "a new centre for the contemporary arts".

Union Terrace Gardens, between the city's Union Street – one of the finest streets in Britain – and the Rosemount Viaduct with the Art Gallery, were handsomely laid out in 1877 in the valley of the now-hidden Denburn. Some of the elms surviving here from the old Corbie Haugh, or wood, are 200 years old. But into this sloping bank are going to be gouged a series of arbitrary glazed slits, housing Peacock Visual Arts, dance studios, multi-purpose areas and, naturally, a café and restaurant. This proposed "beautiful, iconic [what else?] building" (see illustration) is designed by the international firm of "award-winning" architects, based in London, Brisac Gonzalez.

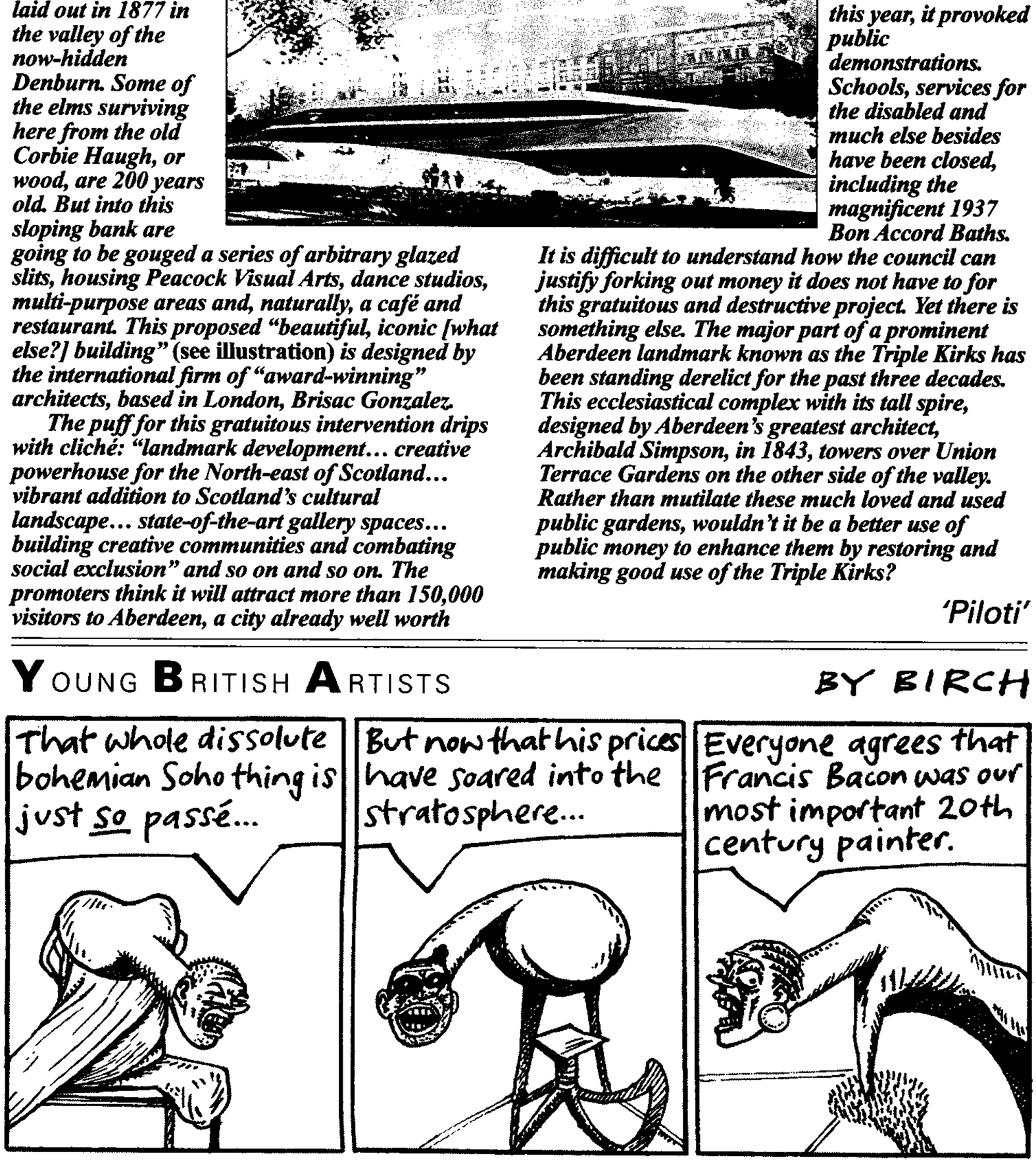
The puff for this gratuitous intervention drips with cliché: "landmark development… creative powerhouse for the North-east of Scotland… vibrant addition to Scotland's cultural landscape… state-of-the-art gallery spaces… building creative communities and combating social exclusion" and so on and so on. The promoters think it will attract more than 150,000 visitors to Aberdeen, a city already well worth visiting for its wonderful granite architecture, ancient cathedral and existing, superb Art Gallery. The new "hub of artistic energy" will cost a mere £13m, much of which is to come from the Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and, not least, Aberdeen city council.

This is odd because the city council, now run by a Liberal Democrat/SNP coalition, is £50m in the red. When cuts in public services of £27m were announced earlier this year, it provoked public demonstrations. Schools, services for the disabled and much else besides have been closed, including the magnificent 1937 Bon Accord Baths. It is difficult to understand how the council can justify forking out money it does not have to for this gratuitous and destructive project. Yet there is something else. The major part of a prominent Aberdeen landmark known as the Triple Kirks has been standing derelict for the past three decades. This ecclesiastical complex with its tall spire, designed by Aberdeen's greatest architect, Archibald Simpson, in 1843, towers over Union Terrace Gardens on the other side of the valley. Rather than mutilate these much loved and used public gardens, wouldn't it be a better use of public money to enhance them by restoring and making good use of the Triple Kirks?

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


That whole dissolute bohemian Soho thing is just so passé...
But now that his prices have soared into the stratosphere...
Everyone agrees that Francis Bacon was our most important 20th century painter.

I-SPY *Berlin*

Submitted by Len Griffiths. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

"ROYAL Opera Opens to the Great Unwashed" (or words to that effect) ran several banner headlines last week when Covent Garden launched its new season with a show that played to an audience of *Sun* readers.

If nothing else it made a story students of the British class system will cherish. As of course will the Royal Opera itself, to be flourished when the next bout of Olympics-stricken, credit-crunched Arts Council subsidy negotiations comes around.

The idea was that the season should open with what Tony Hall, chief executive of the ROH, called an "anti-gala" – filling the stalls not with the usual array of hedge-fund managers and Knightsbridge wives but whatever ordinary, horny-handed toilers had bought the *Sun* newspaper on 30 July. They and only they would be able to apply for tickets, at a rate discounted down to as little as £7.50 by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in the laudable hope of encouraging people who would never normally go to the opera to give it a try.

From the more than usual amounts of crimplene, tattoos and cheap aftershave drifting around the auditorium, you could argue that it worked. Parties of Essex girls laughed raucously at every innuendo in the surtitles. And men who looked like bouncers, with a ring on every finger, loitered at the champagne bar. Result!

But the Royal Opera's insistence that all 2,226 tickets had gone to *Sun* readers wasn't quite the truth. To start with, there were hoards of journos, mostly the up-market sort. And as they scoured the punters for heart-warming stories about coming to the opera for the first time, they collected several hundred variants on "Well actually we're regulars, but Rupert heard about this offer/found a copy of this dreadful paper on the train/was told about it by his secretary..."

In other words, the toffs had simply played the *Sun* at its own game. And their response to questions tended to conclude with: "Naturally, we'd never buy the paper as a rule," accompanied by an embarrassed smile.

The trumpeting claims by the Royal Opera that this heralded a new era of egalitarianism in Bow Street rang pretty hollow too. It may have been the first night of the season, but the ROH had taken care not to put on a new production – merely a revival of an old and not especially distinguished *Don Giovanni*, sexed up for the *Sun* with poster ads of Simon Keenlyside stripped to the waist.

And if you want to know where Covent Garden's heart still lies, beneath the circus act of inclusivity, you only have to visit its website and follow the instructions to register for further information. There's a box you have to fill in marked "title". But to spare undue effort, it supplies an automatic menu list covering every option from Count, Countess, Duke of, HRH the Duke of and HRH Shah Sultan through to King and Queen!

How touching that the ROH provides this helpful shortcut for patrons. How relieved those HRHs must be not to have to type their names out in full. But why does the list specifically include "HE the French Ambassador M..." when all other countries have to make do with just "Ambassador". Is this an historical anomaly? Or is man-of-the-people Tony Hall after a Légion d'Honneur perhaps?

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

That cartoon row in full...

Sir,

As a clergy pensioner who has been tickled by your organ for decades, I have to say I laughed out loud at the "swearing vicar" cartoon which caused a "disgusted" reader to cancel his subscription.

What do these idiots expect? After all, you're not the sodding Church Times, are you?

Yours,
DAVID BLOOD,

London N1.

Sir,

"Jesus Christ, what now? I'm trying to write a fucking email!" I thought that Tony Husband's cartoon was one of the funniest I have seen for years. It has joined my "cut-out-and-keep" collection which features my all-time favourite by the late Kevin Woodcock of the little girl's painting of her mummy.

Yours in fits,
CARLO VUOLO,

Via email.

Sir,

I have been a reader of Private Eye for, well, ages, and I have noted a deterioration of the quality over the years. Of late, despite the many very funny cartoons and excellent articles, there have been, printed within the 'letters' section, a number of missives from small-minded and dull readers threatening to cancel their subscription/ Direct Debit/order with the milkman in response to their lives being ruined by a deeply offensive cartoon measuring a whopping 5x7cm cunningly and evilly hidden amongst some thirty pages of excellent journalism.

Personally, I am deeply offended by your printing these letters and were it not for the recession, I would take out an extra subscription in protest.

Yours in sorrow and disgust,
ANDREW S WILLIS,

Via email.

PS: I would get out more, but it's raining. Again.

Fan mail

Sir,

I was somewhat taken aback to see that in issue 1218 you printed a letter where the correspondent called himself "Aston Villa" and then added his real name in brackets. I'm surprised you let this happen as it could start a worrying trend of letter writers trying to get the name of their favourite team into the Eye.

Yours apprehensively,
CARL ISLEUNITED.

Bones of contention

Sir,

Instead of championing the resumption of the cruel and unnecessary transport of live calves to the Continent, Muckspreader (Eye 1218) would be better employed in flagging up the advantages of the more humane and efficient system of transporting refrigerated meat from animals which have been freshly killed as near their farms as possible.

Yours faithfully,
JULIA ANDERSON,

Sowerby Bridge, W. Yorkshire.

Rock and a hard place

Sir,

Re Northern Rock.

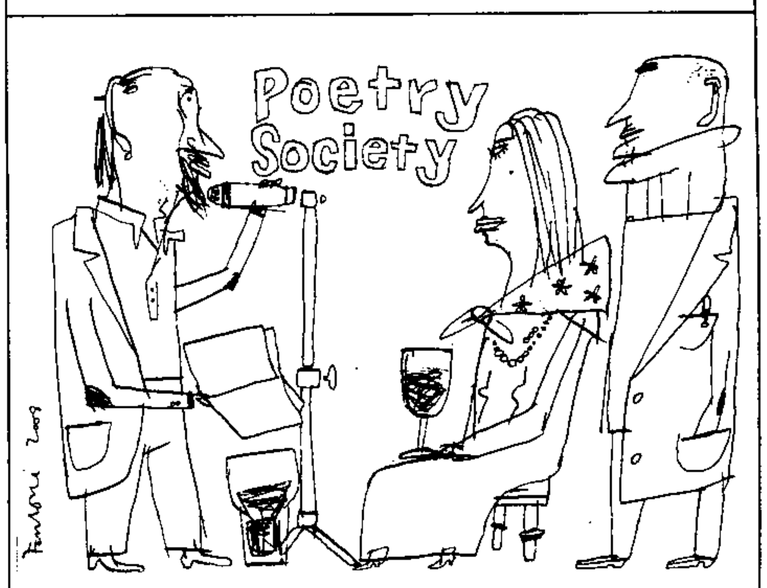
I know it is trendy to bang on about the incompetence of the FSA, the government and the banking sector in general– how could they be so useless? But could you ask Hackwatch to review the hundreds of warnings, before the crash in the press and your organ, of the precariousness of the business model of Northern Rock? I suspect Hackwatch would need to be renamed Hindsight.

Maybe I should add that I am nothing to the banking sector – just someone who gets pissed off with smart arses who don't like to accept that a small part of the blame lies at our own feet for not spotting it either!

Regards,
GUS KING,

Via email.

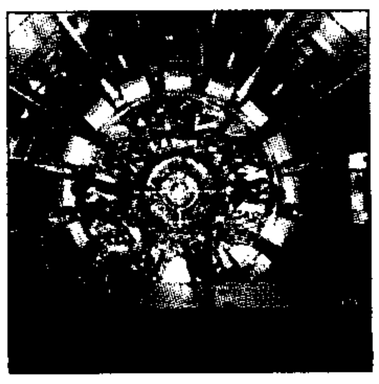
Scenes You Seldom See



"My own poems are rubbish, so this evening I shall read from Keats, Shelley and John Donne"

Lookalike

LHC



Stargate

Sir,

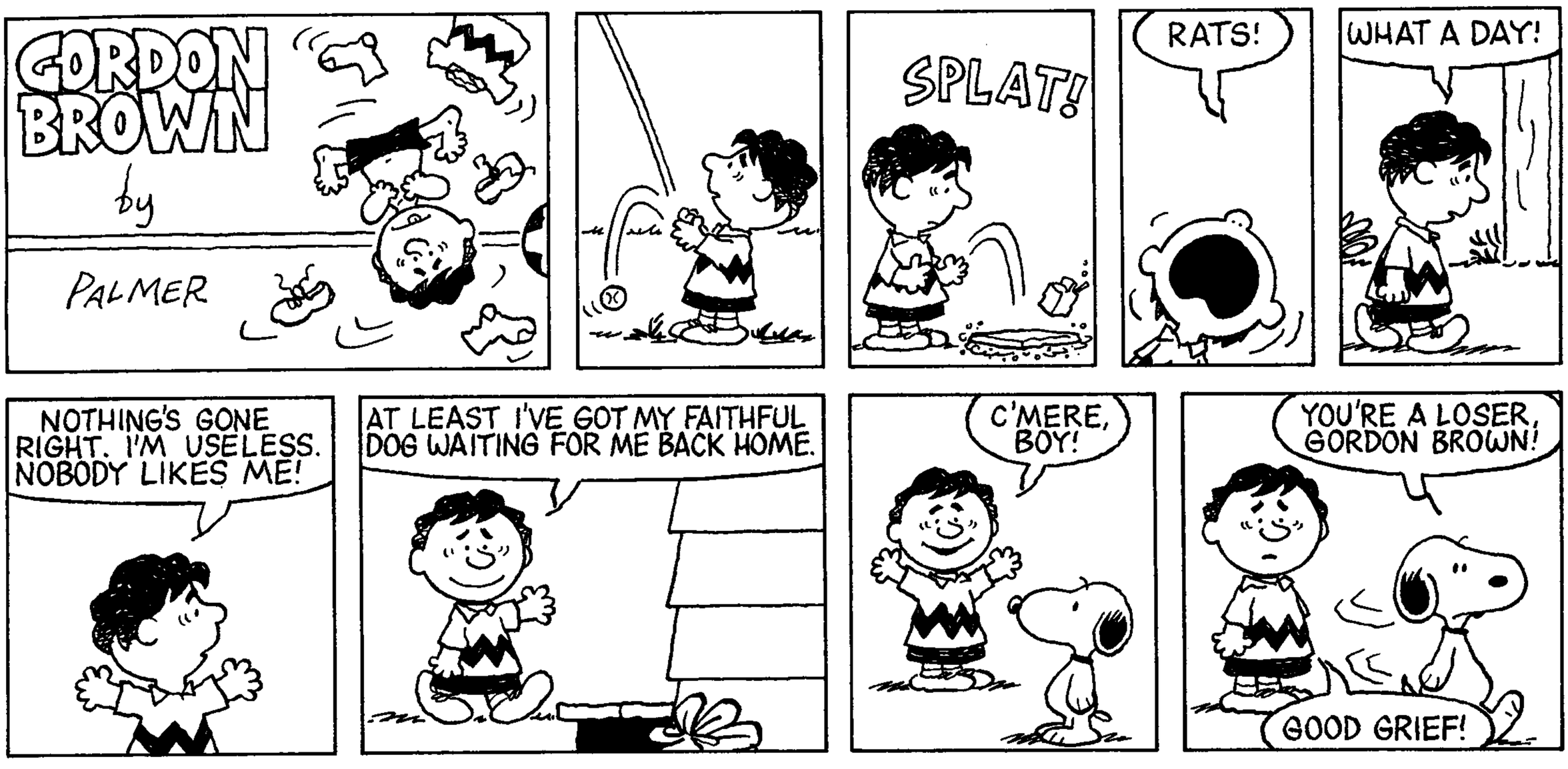
While reading recently about the Large Hadron Collider, I encountered the attached picture [LHC] – and was sharply reminded of another ring-like device [Stargate] that has also allegedly threatened destruction for all mankind in the realm of film and television.

When switched on, may we possibly encounter a whole new world of scientific discovery rather more literally than physicists are suggesting?

ANDREW WILLIAMS
Markfield, Leicestershire

NO FLYING* Rail Journeys from St Pancreas
Titan HiTours advertisement

20% Off
When order a Starter, Main Course & Suite
Advertisement for the Wakefield Star



Crystal balls

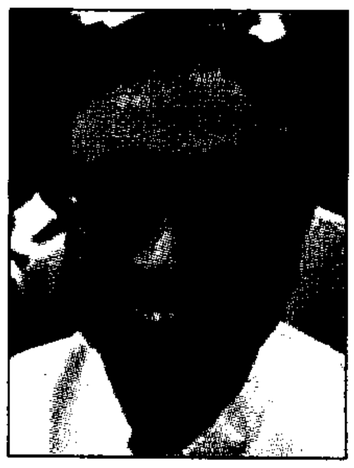
Sir,

Whatever the real or ethereal properties of a radio wave espoused by Nic Ford BSc ("Mumbo Jumbo", Letters, Eye 1218) it is repeatable, testable science. Even the famed placebo effect has the benefit of being susceptible to the scientific "gold standard" of double-blind trials. "Alternative healing practices" have none of these attributes, which is why they are labelled (and rightly scorned in my view) as "alternative". As the late, lamented John Diamond pointed out, there is only medicine that works and medicine that doesn't. When Reiki, Homeopathy, Crystals et al are proved to be effective, they will cease to be "alternative" and join the mainstream. Unfortunately, the practitioners of these methods shun such vindication whilst claiming the high moral and ethical ground (and taking lots of money off the desperate). "Progressive thinkers"? I nearly laughed my Chakras off.

STAN BROADWELL,

Redfield, Bristol.

Lookalike



Theo Paphitis

Asif Ali Zardari

Sir,

Could there be any relationship between 'Dragon's Den' Theo Paphitis, whom we have regularly seen negotiating for at least ten per cent of others' livelihoods, and Asif Ali Zardari the widower of Benazir Bhutto whose nickname is 'Mr Ten Per Cent' owing to the alleged cut he used to take from government contracts while his wife was in office?

Surely Pakistan should be told.

Yours faithfully,
PHIL CROOKES

Vie email

Black mark

Sir,

I was shocked to see you attack an attempt to teach history that might be both more relevant to modern day Britain's circumstances, and representative of what actually happened in these islands ("Black British History Tops Curriculum", Eye 1218). You resorted to a general racist slur which suggested that black people were incapable of achieving anything significant, so that we would have to study their sad, ordinary lives, rather than those of the "great" white statesmen. In fact, how can anything "top" a curriculum? It's either in it or it isn't.

It's a shame that you swallowed all that guff that you were taught in your privileged public schools about the "great" men. Churchill was largely a buffoon and hopeless warmonger before his time came and he did step up to the mark of statesmanship. And if you think teaching people about the insane and patently historically unreliable ramblings of The Venerable Bede is likely to engage youngsters, then I wish you luck. Shakespeare is usually taught in the context of literature, there being very little historical fact to go on, as Bill Bryson's recent book on the subject confirms.

SEAN KAVANAGH,

Midgley, W. Yorkshire.

Pedantry Corner

... Re the photo of former England Manager Steve McClaren, page 27 of the last edition (Eye 1218). I assume the gag is intended to be the exclusion of the last three letters of the word Arsenal leaving Mr McClaren sat below a big Arse.

I however am more concerned with the accompanying text "Empathy: Steve McClaren at Highbury yesterday" – as any fule kno, Arsenal have not played at Highbury for over two years. Would it be possible for you to award "Our Sally" a pay rise in order that she no longer requires to moonlight at The Telegraph?

AL BUCHAN.

... Mr Coyle (Pedantry Corner, Eye 1218), I'm afraid, is wrong when he says he's afraid that Mr Breville is wrong, regarding the mortality of Lara Croft's mother. If Mr Coyle took his own advice and played more computer games, he'd know that Mother Croft may well still be with us. As the cliffhanger ending of Tomb Raider: Legend depicted, although trapped on the other side of a portal, she seems very much alive. The story will continue in the forthcoming Tomb Raider: Underworld.

JOHN WALKER.

... No, no, Mr Coyle (Pedantry Corner, Eye 1218). The title Countess of Abingdon would not pass independently to a daughter of the previous countess. It is a courtesy title that applies only to the wife of an Earl of Abingdon; the new earl would be some male relative of the previous earl, and his wife would be the new countess. Lara would remain Lady Lara Croft.

BOB RICHMAN.

... I am confused by Philip Saunder's comments (Pedantry Corner, Eye 1218).

Nick Beale said (Eye 1217) that Ferrybridge is the UK's first 2000 MW coal-fired power station. What is wrong with that? He did not say that it is adjacent to the A1 road, but so what?

Drax, geographically correctly identified by Mr Saunders, is the first (and only) 4000 MW station.

A clue is that it has more cooling towers.

PETER FLEMING.

... Re "Scenes you seldom see" (Eye 1218) Hmm, If a reduced straight coupler is 15mm at one end, shouldn't its dimension at the other end be either greater or lesser than 15mm to be a reduced coupler? If this is not so, then perhaps we should be told.

JOHN JARVIS.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The highlight for me was when the top came off and you realised what a lovely pair they were."

LEN GOODMAN, BBC1
(Conor McGovern)

"That really is a bow in their arrow..."

Commentator, Sky Sports Xtra
(Phil Mart)

"They've got to stop this runaway train at the top of the football tree."

DAVID PLEAT, Radio 5 Live
(Andrew Harrison)

"That is not just a legacy, it is there for the future."

ALEX SALMOND, BBC1
(Robbie Simpson)

"This has been a perennial problem for many years."

DAVID PLEAT, Radio 5 Live
(Martin Macari)

Letter from **Turks and Caicos**

from Our Own Correspondent

AS ONE of the last outposts of empire, it falls to parliament in London to have a say in our affairs.

There may be just 30,000 of us living in the Turks and Caicos, an archipelago just south of the Bahamas, but we gave members of the Commons foreign affairs committee plenty to think about on a recent visit. Already the governor has been replaced and a formal investigation by Sir Robin Auld QC has been ordered into, among other lapses in good governance, suspected "corruption or other serious dishonesty".

At the centre of the storm is the ruling Progressive National Party (PNP). Its top people face allegations that range from corruption, money laundering and dodgy land deals, to suppression of free speech and the media. Emails are being deleted and bank accounts emptied, while the Grand Turk supreme court record offices, hit by three fires, appear to have developed a curious capacity for spontaneous self-combustion.

At the top of the pile of rotten fruit is the PNP premier, Michael Eugene Misick, a 42 year old with an honorary doctorate from the academic power house that is the University of Buckingham. Public service has been good to Misick. Within six months of his victory in August 2006, after an election unkind souls complained had been bought with promises of crown land and hard cash, Michael had purchased a home for himself worth $10m without recourse to a mortgage. Not bad on a ministerial salary of $150,000 and declared assets of just $50,000.

Alas, such personal financial alchemy has been harder to repeat on the national stage. Two years on, with the country's coffers bare and an overdraft of $6m coupled to a deficit of $38m (according to the finance minister, Floyd Hall, a deficit "the country could look on with pride"!), Michael's lavish lifestyle continues to provide our otherwise parochial patch with quality entertainment.

His marriage to C-list Hollywood actress LisaRaye McCoy-Misick has fallen apart in spectacular public fashion amid allegations of infidelity - and the rape of one of LisaRaye's American friends at the marital mansion. Happily, the FBI has a witness to clear our leader: a young woman has come forward, saying the sex was consensual. She should know, as she was in Misick's swimming pool, apparently joining in the act at the time.

So that's all right then: it wasn't rape, it was a just a three-way romp involving the premier at his official residence during a late night party while the first lady was out of town. When LisaRaye returned to confront her husband, it all got a bit heated. Both ended up in the local ER for treatment for bites and other wounds.

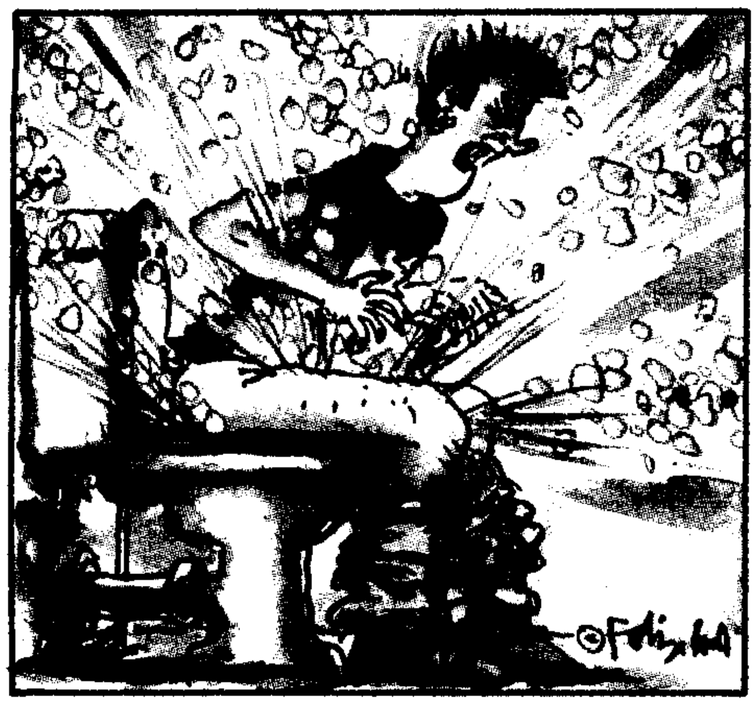
Meanwhile, back in London the foreign affairs committee is tearing through its work and hopes to come up with a preliminary report as early as... November. It is a sign of the times that people in the opposition Peoples Democratic Movement want the UK to suspend our constitution and right to self-government while our various scandals are investigated and tidied up.

Michael offered his own solution to the woes of the nation. In order to promote the healing of political differences, and in no way an attempt to deflect attention away from his own part in the nation's current difficulties, with an exquisite sense of timing he called upon all the country's many churches to declare a national day of prayer and fasting. His choice of date was unfortunate: 7 September – the very day, it turned out, that Hurricane Ike blew in from the heavens and flattened our country.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "I was sitting on the toilet in my apartment, attempting to pass a stool," Martin Bierbauer told reporters in Eisenstadt, "when the pipes began rumbling. The noise got so loud that I decided to cut short my visit, but before I could pull my trousers up, hailstones the size of golf balls started exploding out of the toilet bowl, like a popcorn machine gone berserk. I grabbed a



piece of board and tried to put it over the toilet, but the pressure was so great that I couldn't hold it down. Within minutes, there was an avalanche of ice that filled the toilet, then the bathroom, the entire flat, and eventually the entire building. I got the hell out real fast, still adjusting my clothing, and other residents were doing the same, with hailstones following us down the staircase. It's a disgrace. I was blown clean off the lavatory, and anally damaged. I am demanding substantial damages for my ordeal."

Local council spokesman Wolfgang Leinner later explained what had happened to the building in Tinhof Strasse. "Freak weather conditions led the temperature to plunge from 35 degrees centigrade to zero within a few hours, and as a result severe hail storms battered parts of the country. In this case, the hailstones flooded a local drain and blocked it. More hailstones fell, the pressure was too great, and because they had nowhere else to go, they forced their way up through the building's plumbing and out through the toilets. They soon melted, but unfortunately the mixture of water and raw sewage has now made the building uninhabitable." *(Austrian Times, 21/7/08. Spotter: Mal Function)*

– ● –

● *"It was a tropical night in Brisbane in 1984," Graham Barker told Australian television viewers, "and I was alone in a youth hostel, bored. My attention drifted towards my belly button, and there it was... fluff! I must have seen it before, but this was the first time I picked it out and wondered how much navel fluff one person could generate in a lifetime. Enough to fill a cushion perhaps? The only way to find out was to begin collecting it.*

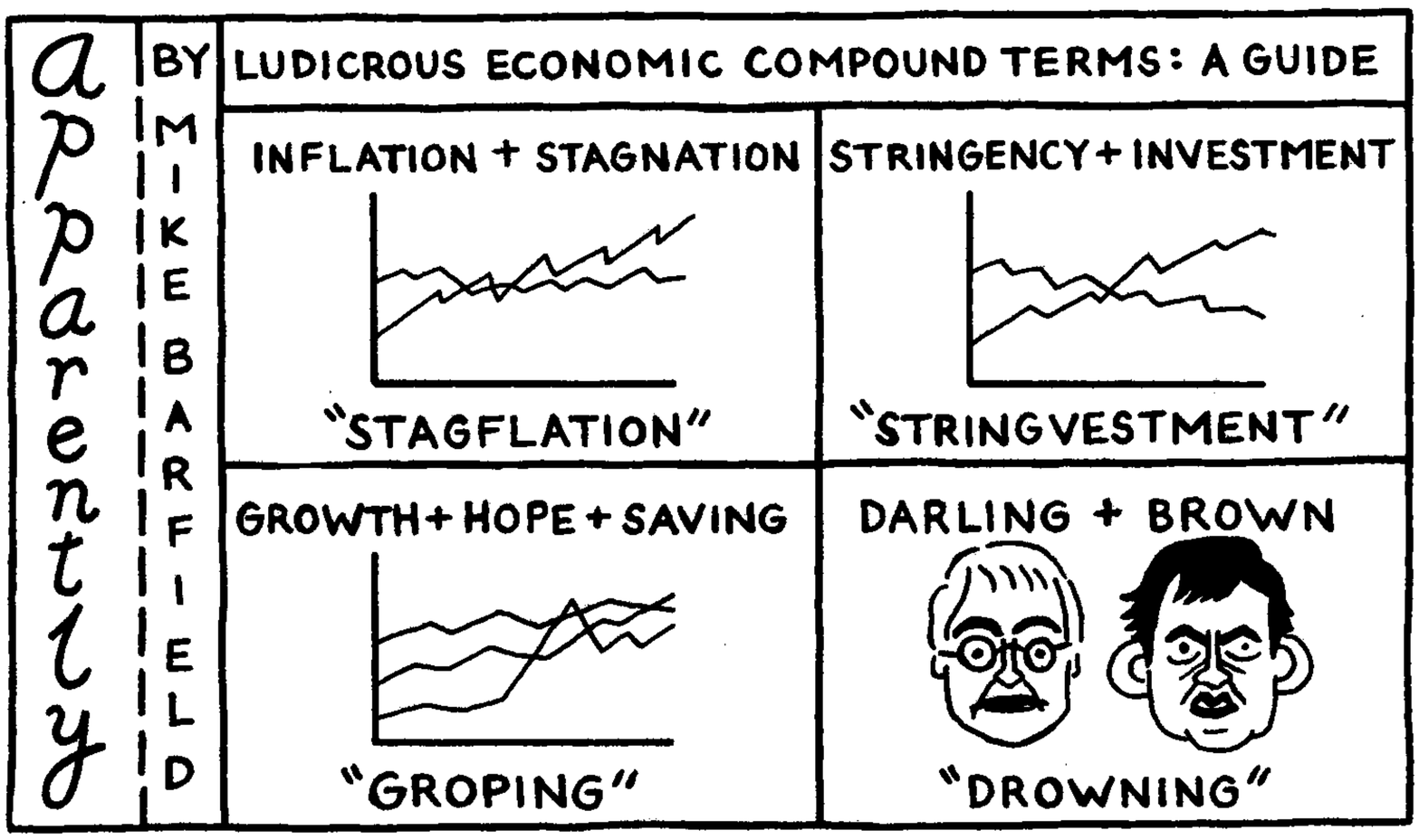
"My first pieces were stored in an empty film canister, but the daily ritual of removing fluff from my navel soon required a larger container. So I began putting the fluff into a glass jar each day before I showered. My collection is currently housed in three jars, which is disappointingly little to show for a quarter-century of daily harvesting. Maybe I'll never have enough to stuff a cushion, but if I combine it with these five packets of beard clippings that I've also been collecting for two decades, who knows?" (ABC [Australia], 16/5/08. Spotter: Nicholas Barlow)

– ● –

● "As a highly regarded computer engineer, Terry Childs was trusted with the city's computer system," Mayor Gavin Newsom told a press conference in San Francisco, "but we now regard him as a rogue employee who has become a bit maniacal. After being disciplined at work recently, he began monitoring the e-mails of city administrators, to see what they were saying about his case. When we confronted him about this, he became angry and tampered with the city government's data network, creating a secret password to give himself exclusive access. He was arrested four days ago, but still refuses to tell us what the password is, and although we've hired specialists to try to gain access, San Francisco's administrators are currently unable to access the government's data network."

Speaking outside the Hall of Justice jail where Childs was being held, his defense attorney Erin Crane told reporters that "my client is innocent of the charges against him. The reason he is protective of the password is because his co-workers have shown complete indifference to protecting the city's data system, and were hindering his ability to maintain it. His behaviour is not a danger to the public."

After eight days in jail, Childs agreed to divulge the password to Mayor Newsom, and the city administrators regained access to their computer network. *(San Francisco Chronicle, 23/7/08. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*



From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Spelling Society president says spelling is a waste of time

I was at uni in the ninety's before standard's plumbed. Now I am a high flier in the civil service and the new graduate recruit's grasp of English are shocking. Professor John Well's says "make spelling more simpler and get rid of apostrophe's". He obviously does'nt understand how crucial these oh-so-called little detail's are when inferring to clear meaning's. – ***Icarous***

I am loathe to agree with one who says "uni" and wrongly mis-spells the Roman god Icarus, but I must decree myself in agreement notwithstanding. In fact the word "uni" is a good example what you say is happening – which IS HAPPENING – ie how the meaning of a word's meaning gets lost when language decline's. "Uni" means "college" and "versity" comes from the old word "varsity" meaning "far city". So, ergo "university" means "going away to college". Do those who say "uni" know that? I am as you can invariably tell a lecturer in English. One who's life literally centres around word's and who's passion is to preserve our great language. – ***Custodian_of_The_Cannon***

Lone adults quizzed in park

Telford council is right to question any adult who is in the park unaccompanied by a child. They are doing it to stop paedophiles. So why not check all adults WITH children too? They are red handed and laughing at the authorities. – ***Silent_Majority***

spot on silent. its like at legoland, they hav a rock gardern with rocks singing that song rock an roll by the vile pervert gary glitter!!! ● an this is in front of little kids who r to young an innocent to even know who he is!! ●● anyway a parent complaned to jon gaunt on the radio an they stoped it, WELL DONE GAUNTY ☺ "BUT" wat about the other song we will rock you by queen? wat kind of roll model is fredy mercery ??? ●●● – ***Broken_Britan***

this chrismas may-be stop selling glitter to kids, may-be sending out the wrong message? – ***Darling_Deneyze***

I saw a bin marked LITTER near the school. I was with my kids and it made me uneasy. What if someone writes a G on it? – ***Emily***

Murray makes his mark

Rejoice! Rejoice! A Briton in a grand slam final: it doesn't get any better than that! – ***Where's_Your_ Henman_Hat?***

Proudest moment of my listening career. – ***Murray_Maniac***

Sad to see Federer rub Andy's nose in it by holding the cup aloft. He will never be a true champion in my eyes. – ***Anyone_4_Tennis***

COME ON TIM! – ***Bogbrush***

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 27

From the Portakabin of The Supreme Leader, outside the National British Exhibition Centre, Birmingham

NOTE: For the first time my Politburo is meeting **not** in London, but at the very centre of our great country – Birmingham. This will put us closely in touch with the needs and wishes of the British people during the invaluable three hours we spend here before getting the return train back to Euston.

Comrades!

As the harsh British winter approaches, there is only one issue on our minds. How to ensure that all Comrades, and especially the old and the very young Comrades, are able to keep warm as the tundra freezes and the reindeer roam the British Steppes.

That is why, as Supreme Leader and Father of the Nation, I have taken urgent steps to free the nation from the tyranny of fast-rising fuel bills. As we all know, these crippling costs to the average Comrade are the direct result of the greedy profiteering of the capitalist oligarchs who run our oil and gas industries. Their unbridled avarice is bringing misery to millions as they can only look forward to a winter of huddling over a one bar fire.

Many Comrades have urged me to punish these enemies of the State by imposing a so-called windfall tax on the blood-sucking leeches and parasites who are draining the very life blood of our nation.

I have decided not to do that, as I do not wish to upset them. After all, these people have so much to contribute to keeping our economy booming by their wealth creation and entrepreneurial skills.

No. Instead I propose to deal with the REAL problem which is, of course, heat escaping from your loft.

In the coming years, highly trained teams of Latvian loft-laggers will fan out across the country, insulating every home* in Britain, resulting in maximum heat retention in the lofts of our most vulnerable citizens.

This is a sensible, progressive initiative for the long term. It has nothing to do with the sort of short-term, flashy, gimmickry that we became used to under the hated regime of the discredited former leader ex-Comrade Blair.

Instead of coming up with an eminently practical and well-thought through solution, he would no doubt have indulged in a reckless, vote-winning, crowd-pleasing gesture, such as imposing a windfall tax on the power companies and giving the money to the poor members of the proletariat who cannot pay their fuel bills!

Yours, with warm regards**!

Gordon Brown

The Supreme Leader

** Those eligible to benefit from my Lag Loft Initiative (LLI) will include those over 75, those under 2 and the deceased.*

*** This humorous conclusion to my letter was provided by the Jocularity Relaunch Committee, headed by Comrade O'Farrell and is filed under "Heat Related Off The Cuff Witticisms No. 39074".*

A MESSAGE FROM COMRADE HARMAN

I am grateful to the Supreme Leader for giving me the opportunity to clarify a speech which I made to our brothers and sisters at the Congress of Workers' Collectives in Brighton, which some Comrades may have misunderstood.

When it was reported that I had said that our only hope of winning the next election was to declare a new class war, what I actually said was that Gordon Brown is in no way supporting Senator Obama in his bid to become President of the United States. I hope that will be an end to any further confusion on this matter.

This statement is written entirely voluntarily by me on the orders of the Supreme Leader.

COMRADE HARMAN

Jolly-Hockey-Sticks Mum and Deputy Supreme Leader – only a heartbeat away from not being Supreme Leader After The Next Election!

WARNING:
THE ENEMY WITHIN

AS some of you will be aware, we have exposed an attempted coup by a pathetic group of small-time traitors who have been summarily dealt with.

Comrades should ignore the pathetic manoeuvrings of this "gaggle of poisonous and disgruntled neo-Blairites", as my good friend Comrade Dacre, the editor of the Daily Pravda, put it.

May this be a lesson to any others lurking in the shadows who may be tempted to follow the same path.

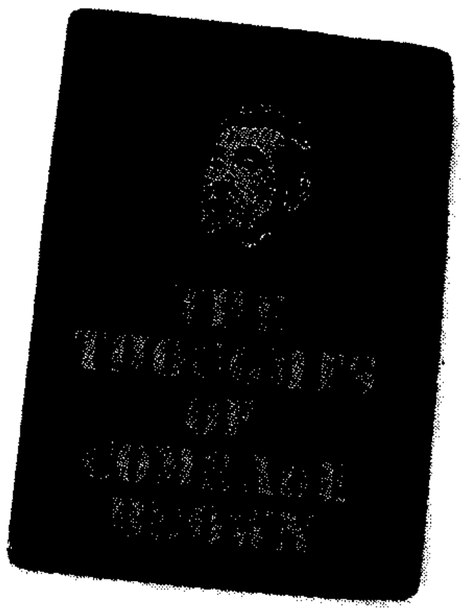
You will be fired without hesitation and banished for ever.

Comrades are reminded that the nation is looking to the Party Congress next week for strong leadership and a display of unity.

The spontaneous standing ovation to my speech will therefore last for a record three hours and will convince everyone that we go forward united in defeat. (Is this right? Ed [Balls])

"No more boom and bust. Well, no more boom anyway"

Taken from the Little Brown Book, now titled 'The Re-thinkings of Comrade Brown'



COMPANY DOESN'T GO BUST SHOCK

by Our Economics Staff

IN A dramatic announcement today a firm gave notice that it had not gone bankrupt had not lost all its shareholders money and had not sacked all its employees.

Financial commentators were amazed at this incredible news and said "it is unbelievable. It is reminiscent of the dark days of the late 1990s when hundreds of firms were not going bust on a regular basis."

"I don't think they're too keen on people asking for tap water"

Nursery Times

Friday, 19 September, 2008

ST GEORGE AND DRAGON – NEW POWER-SHARING DEAL

by Our Man in Zimbabwe **Harare Potter**

AFTER years of conflict, St George and the Dragon have finally agreed to a new power-sharing peace deal.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Dragon will continue to ravage the countryside, breathing fire and eating his opponents.

St George, however, will have overall responsibility for policy initiatives and inter-departmental liaison.

Talking to *Nursery Times,* St George said, "this is a great step forward towards a new future for this nation."

The Dragon told us, "I am confident that St George and I can work together and I look forward to eating him in the near future."

In a subsequent clarification, the Dragon claimed to have been misinterpreted. A spokesman told us that what he actually said was "I look forward to heating him in the near future."

On Other Pages

● Jumblies stranded as sieve firm goes bust **2** ● Humpty Dumpty throws himself off Wall Street **3** ● Damien Hirst "Blackbirds In Pie" installation sells for millions **5**

BROWN PICKS RUNNING MATE

THE BROWN PLOT

Dulle

Mouse

Bland

McDonut

SIX TO WATCH

WHO are they – the bold brave Labour rebels who have put their heads above the parapet in a daring attempt to save the party they love?

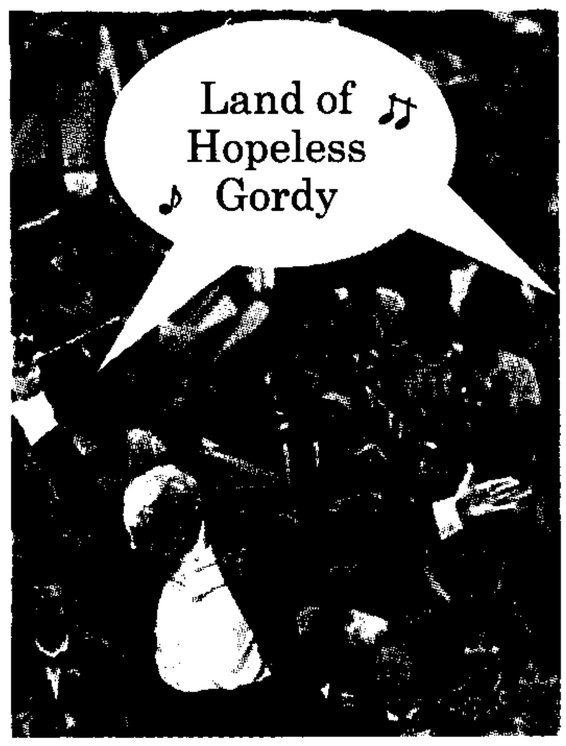
1 Slobahn McDonut, 47. Assistant Junior Senior Whip. She says "This is not about personalities. I certainly haven't got one."

2 Jenny Dulle, 39. Senior Junior Undersecretary at the Ministry of Paperclips. "It is not a matter of getting rid of Gordon. It is a matter of finding someone to replace him."

3 Pam Bland, 52. Former Blairite PPS at the Department of Aspirins and Alkaseltzer. "This is not a coup against the leader. What we need is a proper debate about how to get rid Gordon."

4 Stephanie Mouse, 38. Ex-research assistant to David Blunkett's former Deputy Policy Advisor. "This is not about losing our seats. It's about the Conservatives taking them away." *(That's enough plot. Ed.)*

LAST NIGHT OF THE P.M.



PALIN EXPLAINS FOREIGN POLICY

DAILY TERRORGRAPH
NOV 1606

FAWKES CLEARED OF BOMB PLOT

by Our Legal Staff Joshua Rosenbeard

IN A surprise verdict today Mr Guy Fawkes was cleared by a jury over an alleged attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament.

The jury accepted Mr Fawkes's claim that he and his friends were merely plotting to cause a "public nuisance" in protest at the treatment of religious minorities in Jacobean Britain.

They had never actually intended to blow up anything or anyone and were merely targeted for being Catholic and having beards.

The defence team had argued that the existence of several barrels of gunpowder was merely circumstantial and the conspirators martyrdom engraving (see above) was just a high-spirited prank, but the prosecution has called for a retrial and (cont. p 94)

Who should replace Humphrey 'Humph' Lyttelton as compere of the world's best-loved comedy show – Radio 4's "I'm Sorry I Haven't A Host"

YOU DECIDE

Should it be:

- ☐ **Russell Brand**
- ☐ **Fabio Capello**
- ☐ **Ant and Dec**
- ☐ **Gordon Ramsay**
- ☐ **Sarah Palin**
- ☐ **Banksy**
- ☐ **A.N. Wilson**
- ☐ **The Late Bill Deedes**
- ☐ **Stephen Hawking** ***(surely Fry? Ed.)***

TEXT: 01737472 879847 32159

All calls charged at £94 per minute – callers are warned that the decision may have already been made

"Have you fed the birds today?"

'I WAS VICTIMISED BY RACIST BULLIES,' Says Britain's Top Policeman

by Our Crime Staff **Lunchtime O'Boysinblue**

BRITAIN's most senior police officer yesterday held a press conference to complain about the press conferences held by all the other senior policemen over the last week.

"How am I meant to do my job," asked Sir Ian Blair, "when these Asians are constantly having press conferences accusing me of racial discrimination?"

He continued, "In the last few years they have made my life a misery with their endless whingeing and attempts to sue me."

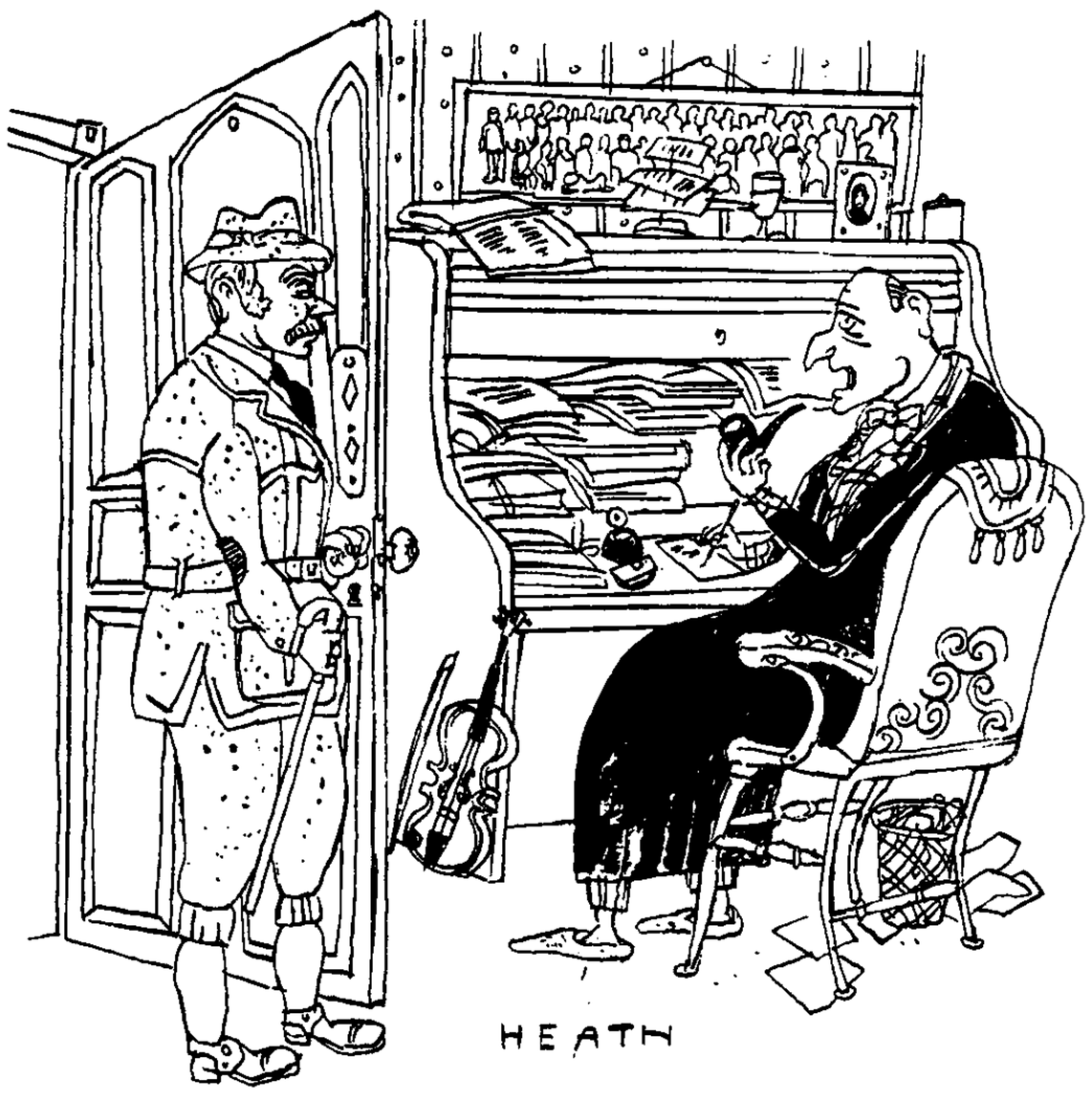
Police Farce

"Well, now the police boot is on the other foot. I am suing them for only suing me on the grounds that I am white. You'll notice that they never sue each other."

Sir Ian concluded, "I tell you, if I joined the police force today, the institutionalised racism of the Asian officers at the top of the Met would ensure that I would never be allowed to sue anyone."

Commissioner Blair

Suspended top cop



"I'm sorry, Watson, but with all this paperwork and targets to meet, I can't possibly take on another case"

SIR CLIFF TOPS CHART AGAIN

by Our Pop Staff **Peter Pan**

SIR Clifford Richard has done it again, releasing yet another chart-topping single. This means that the evergreen Sir Cliff has had a single in the top ten in every decade since the Middle Ages.

His first single, a madrigal entitled, "Our Summer Holy Day Is I-cumen In" (by Sir Clifford de Richard and Ye Shadows), came out in 1337 and remained at number one for the whole of the Hundred Years War.

Sir Clifford last last night said he was delighted that the single "Thank You For A Life Support System" *(contd p 94)*

Lines On The Occasion Of Her Majesty The Queen Failing To Thank Me For One Of My Brilliant Poems

by The Poet Laureate ***Andrew Motion***

It's morning and the rain falls.
Like rain falling in the morning.
I am waiting, waiting, waiting...
But for what?

Inspiration.
Will it come like the rain
Falling out of the sky
As if from nowhere?

It is nearly half-past twelve.
And still nothing comes.

Once the Muse descended
And the words flowed on to the page
Like words flowing on to a page
Or rain falling out of the sky.

But since I took the Laureateship
As we poets call it, I am
Blocked.

Blocked.
Like the drain outside my window
Blocked with leaves.

That's quite good actually.
I might put it in my next poem.

Or maybe I won't.
It's too good for the Queen,
Who has never thanked me properly
For my brilliant poems.

Not even my last one
On the State visit of President Sarkozy
And his wife.

Was it too much to ask?

Not a card, not a note.
Not even an email
Now she has discovered
The Internet.

Here comes the postman now
Coming up the path in the rain.
Plop!
The letter falls on to the mat.
Is it the long-awaited message of Royal gratitude?

No. It is a subscription offer
From The Spectator.
Three free issues and a chance to
Have dinner with Matthew D'Ancona
For £149.
The rain still falls.

© Andrew Lloyd Motion 2008.

● A podcast of this poem, read by Fiona Bruce, is available at www.whingeingtwit.co.uk

EXCLUSIVE TO THE INDEPENDENT

THE BIG QUESTION

Why did the chicken cross the road?

Why are we asking this question now?
Because we've got a whole page to fill and if you do it this way you don't have to pay anyone.

Was the chicken acting voluntarily when it crossed the road – or was it forced by the government?
Such evidence as we have suggests that the chicken was free range and was therefore acting of its own volition when it stepped onto the carriageway.

Did the chicken reach the other side?
Some eyewitnesses claim the chicken arrived safely at its destination. But others insist that the unfortunate bird met a premature death due to the lack of proper supervision or safety procedures.

So, should the government introduce new regulations to safeguard the free passage of poultry across highways?
A Highways Agency working party is already looking into this in conjunction with the RSPCA and Compassion in World farming. The draft regulations should be sent out to consultation within a few months.

Have we reached the end of the page yet?
Yes.

Should the chicken have crossed the road?

Yes It had to get to the other side. There was no other practical option.

No It was taking an unnecessary risk and could have endangered innocent lives disrupting the traffic.

TOMORROW: Why did the Indie reader cross the road to buy the Times? (Because it cost £1)

PLUS: Is sex good for your circulation? Roger Alton tries to get it up. See part 4 of our exciting new supplement 'Is Sex the New Sudoku?'

ME AND MY SPOON

SARAH PALIN

As someone who could well soon be just a heart-beat away from being President of the United States, can I first of all ask you whether spoons have played an important part in your political career?

I was brought up surrounded by old-fashioned Godfearing American spoons. We used them for every kind of thing – from stirring up elk stew to diggin' our way out of a thirty-foot snowdrift. Mercy, we even used 'em to hit pesky Democrats over the head when they got too uppity and the guns got frozen up.

Do you have any foreign spoons?

I am proud to say that all my spoons are made in America although it says here I have seen a Mexican spoon, a Kuwaiti spoon and a French spoon, though don't ask me to describe them as all foreign spoons look pretty darn the same to me!

Do you feel God has given you these spoons for a purpose?

Yes indeedy-doody. The Good Lord in his wisdom has given us the precious gift of spoons to do his work for him. Like it says in the Good Book, "Blessed are the spoonmakers". Yessiree.

Do you and your family share spoons together in your igloo?

We Inuit-Americans have a saying, "Have I Got Moose For You" and when it is time for dinner the whole Palin clan, Trig and Tractor and little Liverpool, they grab their spoons and thank the Good Lord for giving us oil under the ground and polar bears to barbecue in the summer.

Do you use spoons to play hockey?

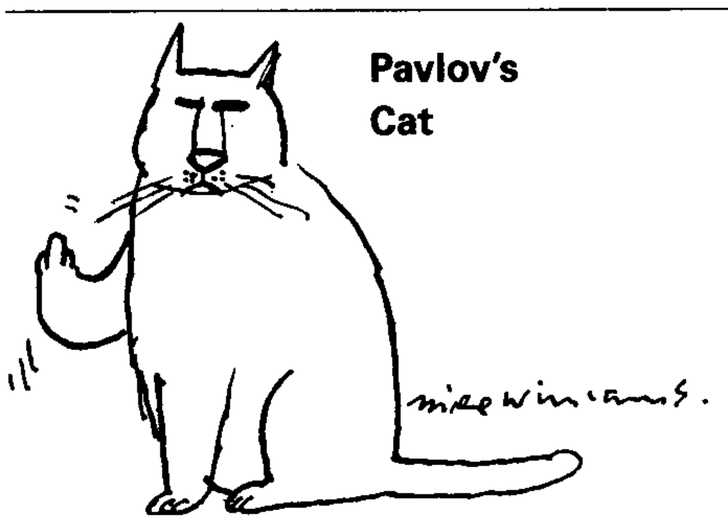
No sir. A spoon is too sacred for hitting a puck. I may be a simple hockey mum but I know the difference between a stick and a spoon. God Bless America.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

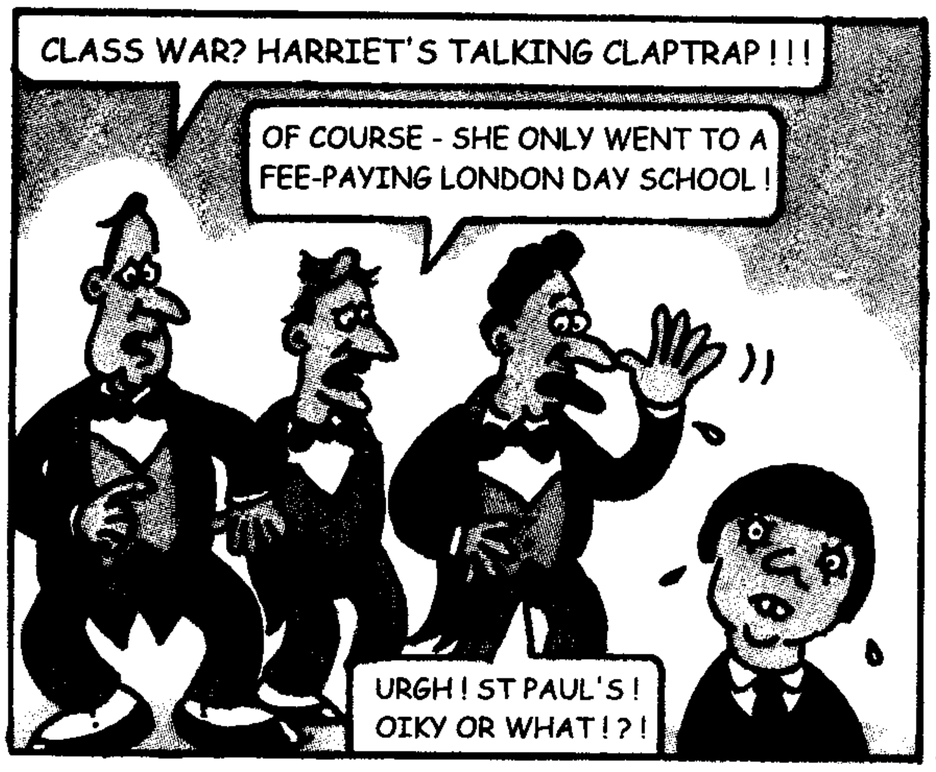
I'd say Amen to that.

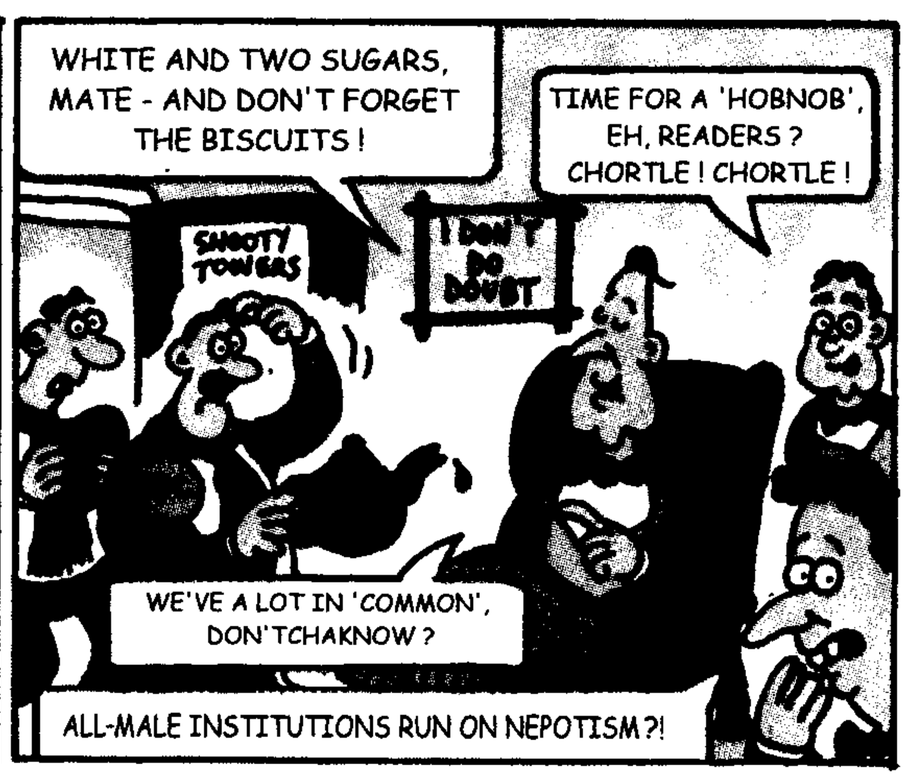
NEXT WEEK: *Steve Jobs – "Me and my jobs"*

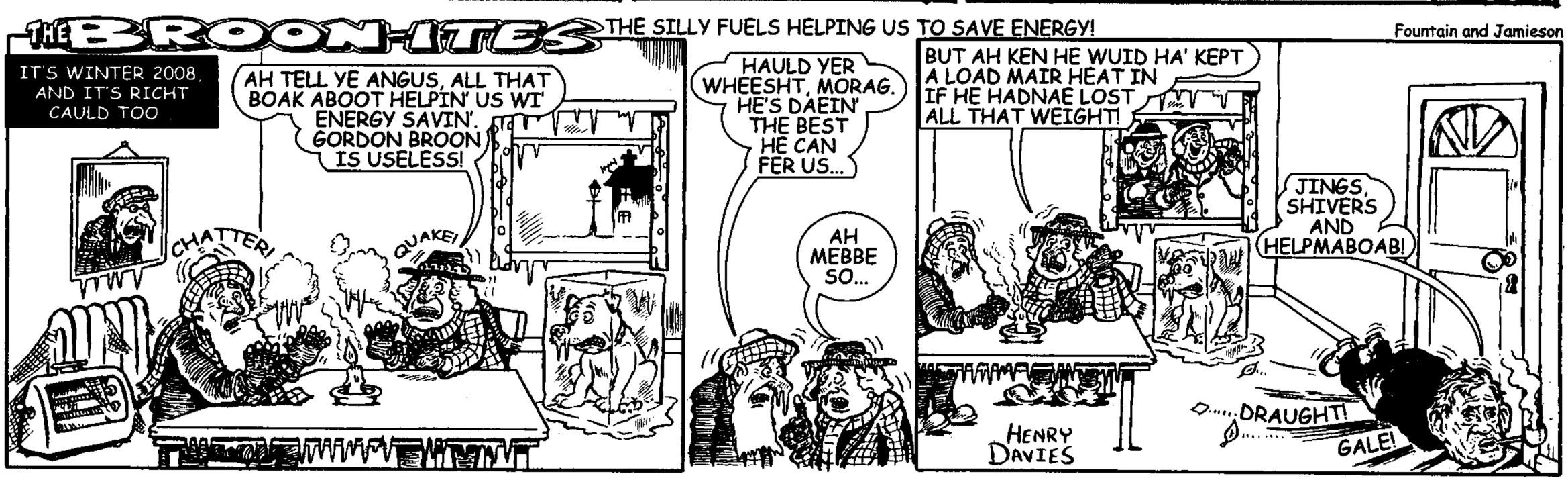
Pavlov's Cat



Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS



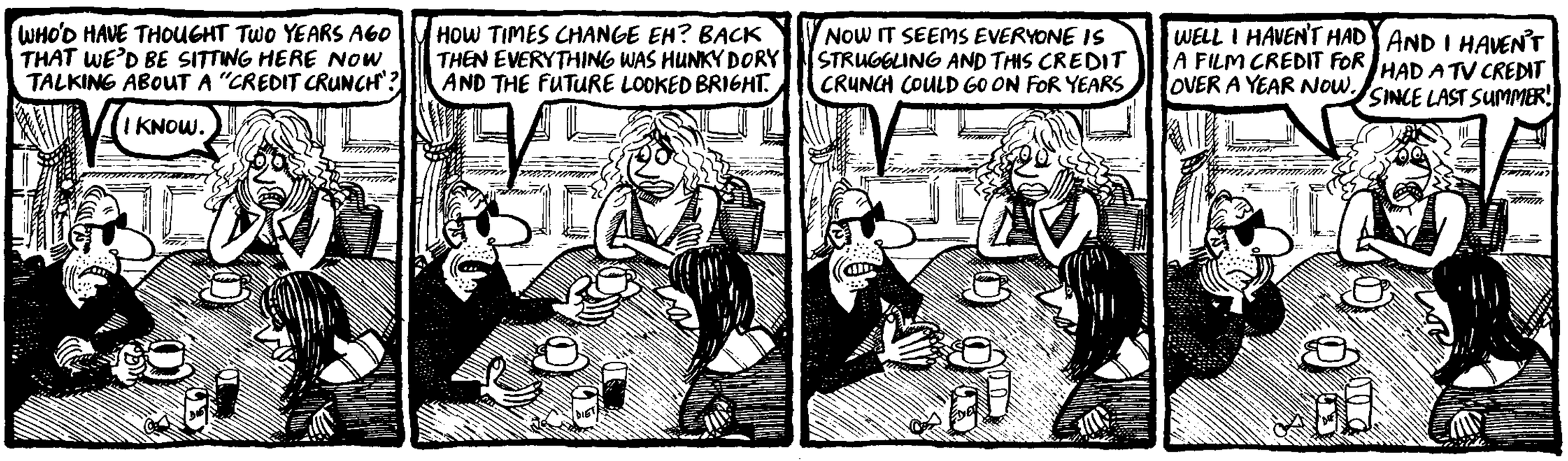

WHITE AND TWO SUGARS, MATE - AND DON'T FORGET THE BISCUITS!
TIME FOR A 'HOBNOB', EH, READERS? CHORTLE! CHORTLE!
SNOOTY TOWERS
I DON'T DO DOUBT
WE'VE A LOT IN 'COMMON', DON'TCHAKNOW?
ALL-MALE INSTITUTIONS RUN ON NEPOTISM?!


THE BROON-ITES
THE SILLY FUELS HELPING US TO SAVE ENERGY!
Fountain and Jamieson
IT'S WINTER 2008, AND IT'S RICHT CAULD TOO
AH TELL YE ANGUS, ALL THAT BOAK ABOOT HELPIN' US WI' ENERGY SAVIN'. GORDON BROON IS USELESS!
CHATTER!
QUAKE!
HAULD YER WHEESHT, MORAG. HE'S DAEIN' THE BEST HE CAN FER US...
AH MEBBE SO...
BUT AH KEN HE WUID HA' KEPT A LOAD MAIR HEAT IN IF HE HADNAE LOST ALL THAT WEIGHT!
JINGS, SHIVERS AND HELPMABOAB!
DRAUGHT!
GALE!
HENRY DAVIES

the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOODY
MANCHESTER CITY BEING BOUGHT BY A GROUP WORTH £555 bn...
IT'S OBSCENE, DISGUSTING...
BANK BALANCE: ENTER PASSWORD
CHELSEA BOARD
LOOK, I'M ONLY WORTH £11·7 bn, I'M VIRTUALLY BROKE!
THERE THERE MR. ABRAMOVICH, EVERYTHING WILL BE OK

Celeb

LIGGER


WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT TWO YEARS AGO THAT WE'D BE SITTING HERE NOW TALKING ABOUT A "CREDIT CRUNCH"?
I KNOW.
HOW TIMES CHANGE EH? BACK THEN EVERYTHING WAS HUNKY DORY AND THE FUTURE LOOKED BRIGHT.
NOW IT SEEMS EVERYONE IS STRUGGLING AND THIS CREDIT CRUNCH COULD GO ON FOR YEARS
WELL I HAVEN'T HAD A FILM CREDIT FOR OVER A YEAR NOW.
AND I HAVEN'T HAD A TV CREDIT SINCE LAST SUMMER!

WORLD'S MOST IMPORTANT EXPERIMENT GETS UNDER WAY

by Our Science Staff **Cern Britton**

MILLIONS waited with bated breath to witness what had been described as the most audacious experiment in living history – the relaunch of the Gordon Brown.

Hundreds of billions of pounds have been spent on what they are calling "the Big Bore" as scientists attempt to replicate the exact conditions of all those years ago when New Labour was born.

Brown Hole

Said a spokesman, "It is difficult for the layman to imagine how different the universe looked when Tony Blair walked up Downing Street for the first election, but that is what we are going to do."

As the clock ticked away, excitement mounted until at exactly 8.31 am the switches were thrown and millions of new policies were unleashed into the tunnel – many of them invisible to the naked eye – where they collided with each other and then disappeared.

Said one eyewitness, "It was incredible. I have never seen anything like it. In fact I didn't see anything at all."

Big Whimper

However, a spokesman for the project said that everything had gone according to plan and that there was now dark at the end of the tunnel *(cont. p. 94)*

On Other Pages

Big Bank Experiment Fails

ATTEMPTS to reproduce conditions for economic growth ended in failure yesterday when everyone's money disappeared down a black hole and *(That's enough pieces about the Big Bang, Ed.)*

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

ENGLAND WIN WORLD CUP!

by Sally Jockstrap

YES, It was 1968 all over again! As England's plucky band of heroes romped home to a stunning victory in the World Cup.

The other nations could only look on in awe as Captain Theo Terry revived memories of Nobby Charlton raising the Jules Verne trophy high above his head.

Yes! 4-0! That was the score that saw England clinch the 2010 World Cup in the very first match.

The rest of the tournament is now just a formality, as coach Faberge Acapulco's band of warriors gave an exhibition of sheer class that has left Brazil, Germany, Argentina, France and Spain saying, "There's no point in carrying on – England are the winners".

It all reminds me of that immortal quote from commentator Denis Woolstencroft when England beat Germany in 1918, "They think it's all quiet on the Western Front. It is now!"

© *Sally Jockstrap 2008.*

LATE SCORE

England v. Croatia

(2nd leg at Wembley)

England 1 Croatia 3

The Large Hadron Collider
An Apology

IN COMMON with all other newspapers, we may have given the impression that we regarded the launching of the Large Hadron Collider as the most important scientific experiment in the history of the world, which would allow us to discover the most closely guarded secrets of the universe. We also may have suggested that there was a concomitant risk of bringing the entire universe to a premature end by creating an all-consuming Black Hole.

Headlines such as "Big Bang To Discover God", "By Tonight We Will Know Everything" and "At 8.31am We Will All Be Dead" may have led readers to suppose that the event in question was in some way interesting and worthy of the enormous coverage that we devoted to it.

We now realise that such a view was profoundly mistaken and are happy to accept that the launch of the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland was in fact part of a long, complex and extremely tedious scientific story which we do not understand and have no desire to read about.

We apologise unreservedly for any disappointment caused to our readers.

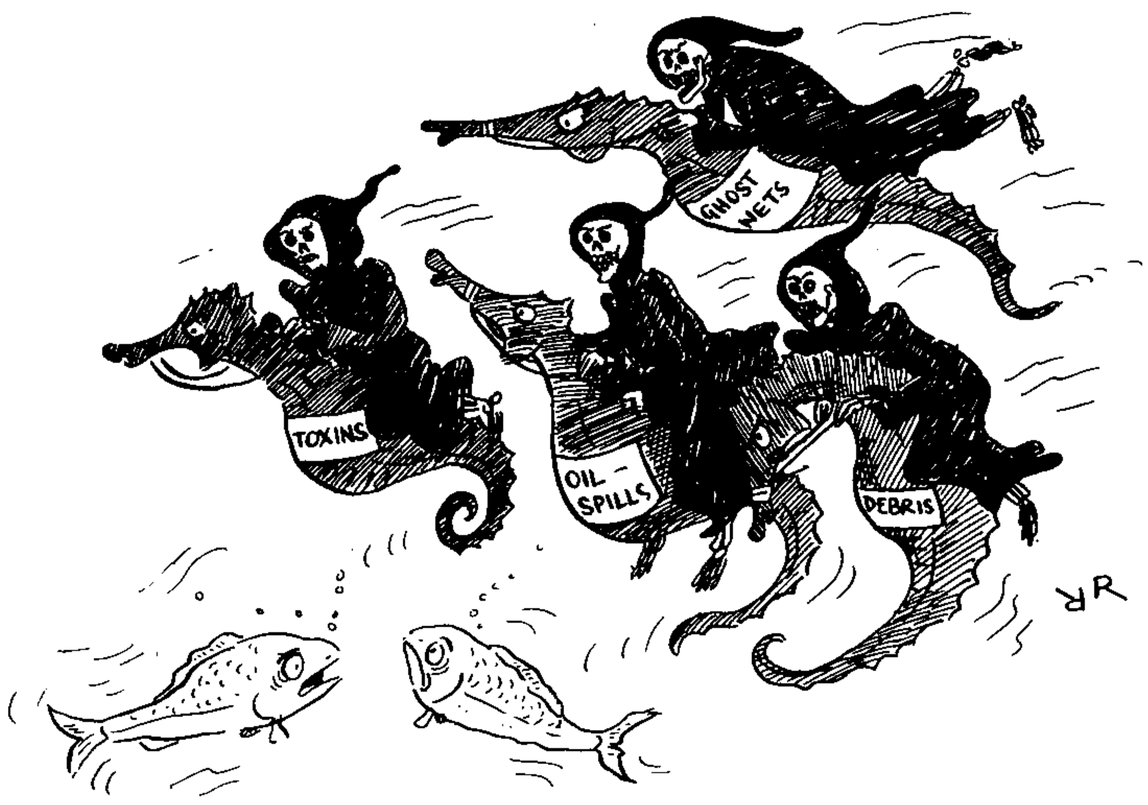
© All Newspapers.

Listen Again

Today Programme

Radio 4, Wednesday

HEAR once again the legendary sequence leading up to 8.31 am on September 10th 2008 in which Andrew Marr accelerated to record levels of excitement until he finally exploded and turned into a black hole.



"They're the four seahorsemen of the Apocolapyse"

IMPORTANT GLOBAL NEWS

WOMAN HAS HAIRCUT

"IT'S NOT as long as it was before," say experts.

WOMAN LEAVES JOB

"THIS means she won't be doing the job any more," say insiders.

WOMAN GOES OUT WITH MAN

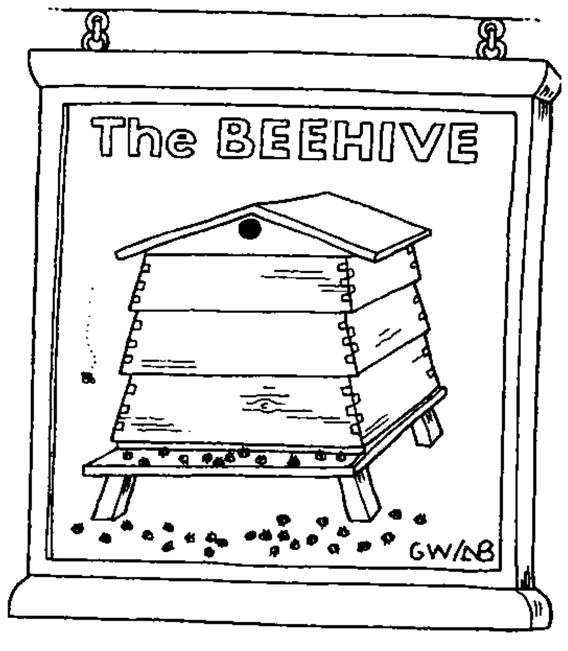
"APPARENTLY they were seen going out," says friends.

School news

St Cakes

Crunch Term begins today. There are three boys and one girl in the school. Prince Abdul Rashid Bin Laden (Coutts) is Treasurer of the Sovereign Fund. Pavlova Oligarchski (Barings) is Head of Pipelines. The Headmaster, Mr R.G. Kipling (O.C.), will be taking all classes until further notice. The Run on the Pound will take place on Founders Day, October 9th. The new School Mosque will be opened by the Very Reverend Rabbi Goldsmith (O.C.). Recessions will be on December 1st.

MODERN INN SIGNS



EXCLUSIVE TO ALL COUNCILS

10 Ways To Spot A Paedo

❶ Man on his own seeking to enter park environment.

❷ Claims to be 'just taking a walk'.

❸ Gets annoyed when stopped by inspector of Local Authority Paedophile Surveillance Unit (PSU).

❹ Denies being paedophile, despite clear evidence to contrary – i.e. attempting to enter park with sandwiches, flask of coffee and book of Sudoku puzzles.

❺ Denies any knowledge of the music of Mr Paul Gadd (aka Gary Glitter) even under cross-examination by trained PSU back-up officers.

❻ Refuses to give name and address so that details can be checked against the sex offenders database.

❼ Finally admits to owning a raincoat.

❽ Hey presto...

❾ Er...

❿ Paedo in custody!

Issued by the Local Government Organisation in association with the Metropolitan Police.

WORLD NEWSPAPER ROUND-UP

The Daily Koreagraph

LEADER DEAD SHOCK

by Our Political Staff **Kim Il Fletcher**

THE leader of the rogue country, North Britain, was believed to be dead last night as his country plunged into crisis and confusion.

Supporters of the unelected dictator Gordon Brown were still desperately maintaining that he was alive, but it is becoming increasingly clear that his life is over.

"No one has seen any sign of life in him for months," said a spokesman. "The country is effectively leaderless."

On other pages

● Man Bites Dog (Restaurant Review) **94**

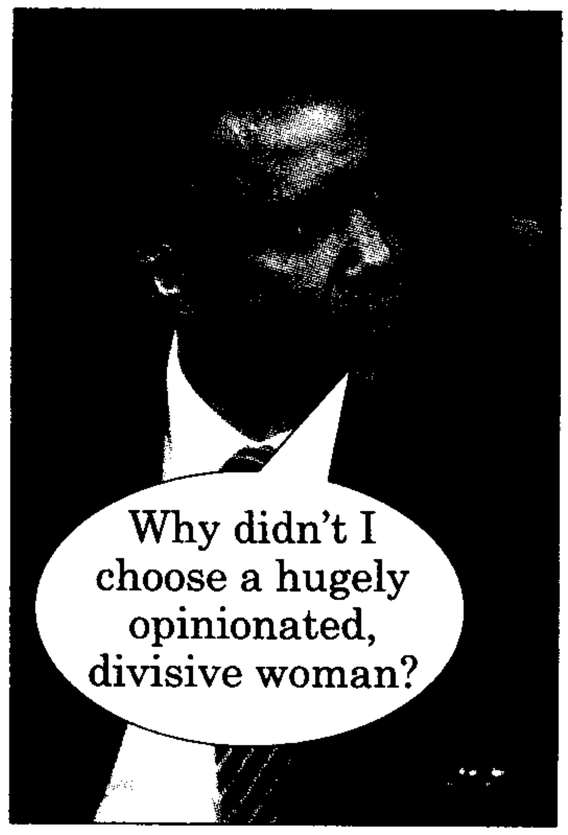
The Sunday Thais

PM HAS TO RETIRE AFTER COOKERY SCANDAL

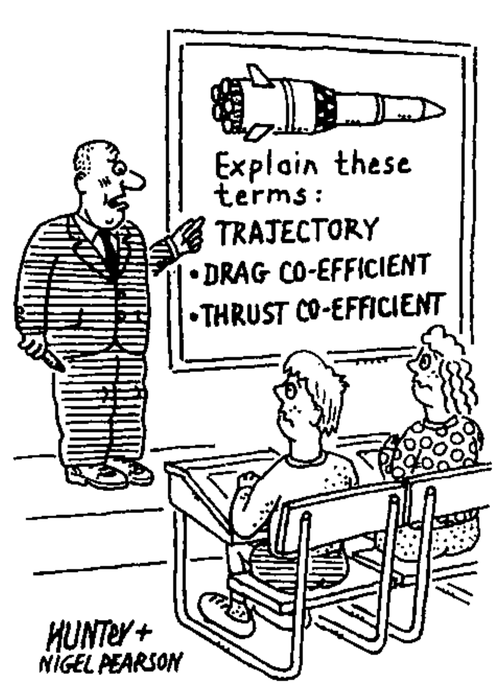
THE Prime Minister of Britain has been forced to resign after he had been seen cooking the books live on television.

● Full story and Brown Curry recipe **94**

U.S. ELECTION LATEST



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LIB DEM CONFERENCE



"Come on, come on! It's not rocket science"

DIARY

DEBO DEVONSHIRE & PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

DEAREST DARLING DEBO,

You really are the dearest and darlingest dear, darling. One's only hope is that one's jovial jottings don't send you hurtling headfirst into the ever-beckoning yet peculiarly labyrinthine land of "nod"!

Yesterday I berzonkered[i] across the kindred kitchen to the frigidaire – or "fridge" as our American cousins will insist on calling it (most irksome!) – so I would be eternally grateful to you were you to be so gracious as to allow me to bore you with this wonderfully detailed account of my "trip".

I alighted early from my kitchen seat, the sudden scrape of wood on linoleum richly reminiscent of the jocose jacaranda soaring splendidly with majestic majesty through the princely pine forests of morose Madagascar. Leaving the tenebrous table behind me due Nor' Nor' East, I marched munificently onwards... *<2000 words edited for reasons of space>* ... and now, armed with the bounteous butter, I perchancingly planned my rarefied route back.

Could you be an angel, darling Debo, and tell me what you think of this sumptuous screed? One so hopes you won't swoon away from boredom!

Huge heaps of kindly kisses,
Paddy

DARLING COWPAT,

Will save it for later! Must rush!
Love,
Debo

DARLINGEST DEBO,

One is living luminously in the affirmative afterglow of your most munificent missive! Oh, Debo, you are the most excellent *ecriviste* – so bountifully brief yet vibrantly vivid! If ever you can spare a mo to cast your exquisite eyes over my measly musings, I would be forever in your delicious debt.

But enough of myself. Tell me, darling angel, what news of you?

Tons of love,
Paddy

PS: Delightful joke: what is black and white and red all over? Answer: A newspaper (!!!!) Chuckles aplenty therein, methinks!

DARLING SQUIDGE,

Breakfast at Buckingham Palace yesterday with Sandy Solzhenitsyn. V. Russian, V. bearded. He couldn't wait to tell me about all the boring books he'd written (yawn!). Also around the dining table were President Ronald Reagan – even more American than one might have imagined! – and HM Fatarse[ii], always so natural, in fact rather too much so for my taste.

Oh, yes, and there was another little man, Stephen Hawking[iii], who was certainly no athlete and would insist on mumbling. He looked COMPLETELY BLANKERS when I mentioned Diana Cooper. Also, a Negro with whiskers by the name of Saddam Hussein, who was introduced as the President of somewhere-or-other I didn't catch. Charm itself. How one loves black people – utterly adorable! I asked him if he had the most marvellous sense of rhythm, but he took it the wrong way. I had to struggle like billy-ho to wrench his wretched hand off my leg.

Howled with laughter at your marvellous riddle. Absolute fits! I read a newspaper once, years ago, but to be frank it wasn't the slightest bit red.

Porky[iv], Slumbers[v], Fudge[vi] and Cock[vii] all coming to stay for the weekend. Don't groan, but I'm off to dig up some turnips and swedes for them to wear on their heads for after din-dins[viii]. So much more fun than Bridge!

Oodles and poodles of love,
Debo.

DARLING DEBO,

Could you bear to cast your bejewell'd eye o'er this weary traveller's joyous twitterings?

Day 1. Yanina, 10 June. We arrive in Prevaza from Yanina with Konitsa and Kalpaki before venturing forth to Kalpaki with Prevaza and Yanina. Umbrous olives procrastinate pleadingly over the weary waters in the priest's leafy garden overlooking a forested valley along which a repining river flowed flowingly, o'erheard flies a squawking convoy of stuffed courgette, flapping fearlessly towards a destination undefined. Ah, the skipping sunbeams on the petulant pine-needless and the verdant grass underfoot. Gentians cluster in every fissure, and clusters fissure in every gentian. Blow the wind southerly, southerly, southerly! One nearly swoons away with the magic of the language as a sunbaked Sarakatsan muleteer, Christos Karvounis, cackles cautiously, recalling rough-hewn rambles with... *<20 pages cut for reasons of space>* ... and when we wake up – joy upon joys! – we fulsomely find we have another 39 delightful days to gorgeously go.

Bundles of love,
Paddy

DARLING TWAT,

Can't wait to read your last scrumptious screed, possibly first thing next year, or, failing that, the year after, leisure permitting.

Greece – it was Greece, wasn't it? – sounds desperately Greek, which is just as it should be. One would hate to hear that it had turned all French.

P.S. Why does everyone insist on being so beastly about poor Dr Crippen? He may have been a mite offhand with his wife, but, my word, he was an excellent doctor with a perfectly lovely smile, a dear old friend of Mecca[ix]

In tearing haste,
Debo

i) Shared pet-word meaning "walked".
ii) Debo's affectionate nickname for HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Possibly derives from the Tuscan hilltop village of Fatarsi .
iii) Bespectacled chemist.
iv) Former Home Secretary.
v) Former First Lord of the Admiralty.
vi) Former Keeper of the Privy Purse
vii) Former President of the Board of Trade .
viii) Mitford name for breakfast.
ix) Mecca Mitford (1902-73) Muslim fundamentalist.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

"Look, everyone – the Red Arrows!"

"Oh no, we've overslept"

Literary Review

Pattern Auster

Man in the Dark
Paul Auster
(Faber, £14.99)

MY NAME is Augustus Brill and I'm the narrator of the brilliant Mr Auster's new novel. Just like his earlier novels, *Oracle Night* (2004) and *Travels in the Scriptorium* (2006), this one is all about writers writing and the mysterious way they seem to stumble into their stories. Another dazzling metafictional riff on the whole notion of fiction. Yawn.

I am alone in the dark, an old man in a wheelchair. I'm an insomniac, so to while away the time I make up stories. One of these is about a man called Brick, a conjuror from present-day New York City who has been magicked into an alternative reality. In this imaginary other world, the destruction of the Twin Towers never happened and America is not at war in Iraq but with itself: New England and the liberal west coast have broken away and declared themselves independent, and the federal armies are bombing and besieging these breakaway states.

Into the midst of this civil war Brill drops Brick, who wakes to find himself in a hole. Literally and also metaphorically. In a Kafkaesque routine, he discovers that he is now a soldier (a corporal in the breakaway states' army) who has been picked to carry out a secret mission: the assassination of a writer named (wait for it) Brill. Apparently, if they kill Brill it will end the war he "caused".

Those on the postmodern fiction course (sophomore level) should mark the following passages:

"There's no single world. There are many worlds, and they all run parallel to one another, worlds and anti-worlds, worlds and shadow-worlds, and each world is dreamed or imagined or written by someone in another world." (p69)

"The story is about a man who must kill the person who created him, and why pretend that I am not that person? By putting myself into the story, the story becomes real. Or else I become unreal, yet one more figment of my own imagination." (p102)

Kept for the grand finale is the account of the death of Brill's granddaughter's ex-boyfriend, Titus, in Iraq. Though opposed to the war, the young man went to work for a civil contractor there in the hopes of gaining some authentic experience to use as a (wait for it) writer. His abduction by insurgents and his decapitation, broadcast live on the internet, would be more shocking if it formed an organic part of a story involving characters you'd grown to know and love, but these people in Brill's life feel no more lifelike than his cipher Brick, and the incident feels like yet another conceit to while away his long dark night of rambling insomnia.

"I'm treading water because I can see the story turning in any one of several directions," writes Brill at one point, or rather Auster. The intention may have been to present the idea that history is not predestined and could have taken an alternative course. At its worst, this is a feeble kind of liberal wishful thinking. (The world doesn't have to be this way!)

As a novel, it echoes the concerns of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, being similarly concerned with the writer's responsibility for his characters' destinies, but as with that flawed novel you get the impression that the writer is more interested in the idea than in the characters who are used (and abused) to portray it.

After his decapitation, "Titus is no longer quite human. He has become the idea of a person," according to Brill). But like Brill himself, or Brick, or the Mr Blank of Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium*, Titus never was much more than a name, a name with certain literary or linguistic echoes, but nothing you could put to a face. Brills says he tells himself stories to make himself forget: but if anything can happen nothing matters, and the result is entirely forgettable.

Books & Bookmen

■ "WE HAVE brought you fun," promised Michael Portillo, chairman of the Booker prize judges, while some of his panel enthused to reporters about a shortlist stuffed with novels they found "intensely readable" and "page-turning".

Ion Trewin, the prize's administrator, implicitly rebuked earlier juries by calling the final sextet "the most readable for years", and indicated a populist bias towards accessibility shared by Portillo in describing the Booker as "Richard and Judy for grown-ups".

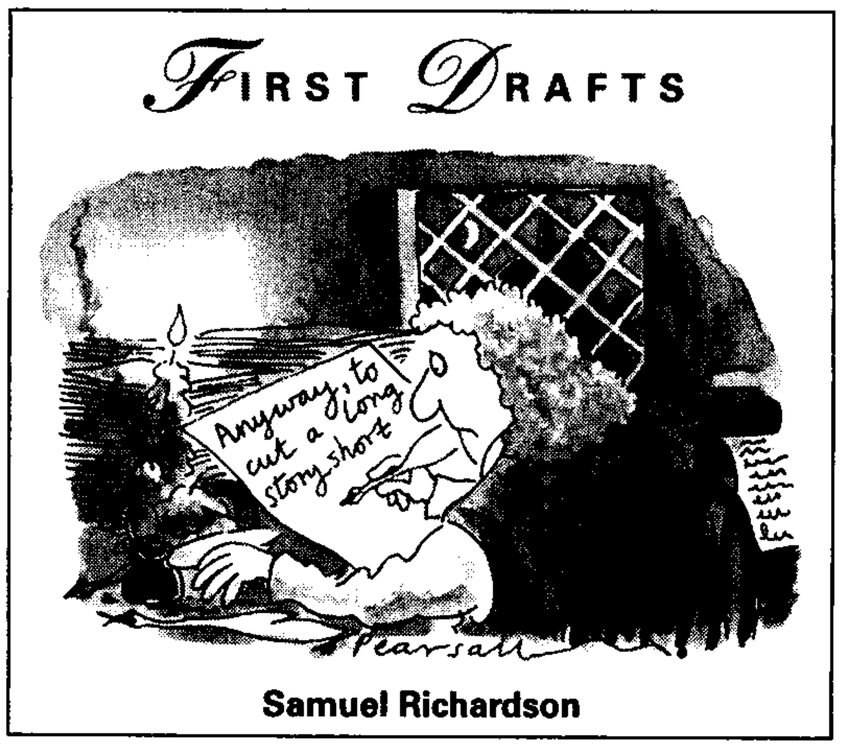
Those who know the books are baffled by the disparity between this hymning of "readability" and the novels they actually chose; if there is any link, it's a possibly Portillo-shaped pattern of loosely political novels, which make substantial statements about a nation or people – India (Amitav Ghosh, Aravind Adiga), Ireland (Sebastian Barry), Britain (Philip Hensher), Europe's Jews (Linda Grant) – often either set in the past or stretching back over decades.

There's scant fun in the dour tales of Barry and Grant, and Richard and Judy viewers attracted by the prospect of page-turners may balk once they realise that Hensher's 70s Sheffield saga and Steve Toltz's Oedipal quest are both over 700 pages. Almost 500 pages on 1830s India, in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, may also prove hard going. The collective fantasy of Portillo & co suggests that one result of reading 120 novels in five months is an enhancement of one's imaginative powers. Put more simply, they're in denial.

■ WITH former winners Salman Rushdie and John Berger eliminated as the longlist 13 were reduced to six, and other much-feted figures ejected earlier, the shortlist lacks a big name – denying onlookers the usual fun (as with Ian McEwan's ordeal last year) of a literary titan forced to scrap with unknowns and first-timers.

Sebastian Barry is now William Hill's 2-1 favourite, but only on the same daft basis - Booker form (he's the only previously shortlisted author) and column inches – that led the bookie to make Rushdie and Joseph O'Neill front-runners when the longlist was announced, allowing arts reporters to feign shock when both got the Portillo boot. (Julian Barnes famously called the prize "posh bingo", but in many respects it's more like a bookworm's Big Brother).

Barry is a widely-admired writer, but even the most sympathetic reviews of *The Secret Scripture* – the kind of glum, past-obsessed tale Irish novelists specialised in 20 years ago, before the country became richer, less Catholic and less inward-looking – have admitted that its ending pongs. McEwan's *Saturday* was viewed as a leading contender three years ago until mockery of its *Dover Beach* scene made even shortlisting it impossible; and *The Secret Scripture* could share its fate as a potential winner with its chances destroyed by a few disastrous pages.



Samuel Richardson

MODESTY BLAZE

"It was the most illustrious panel in the Booker's history."
– George Steiner on the 1972 Booker Prize judges' panel (on which he sat with Cyril Connolly and Elizabeth Bowen), the Guardian, 6 September.

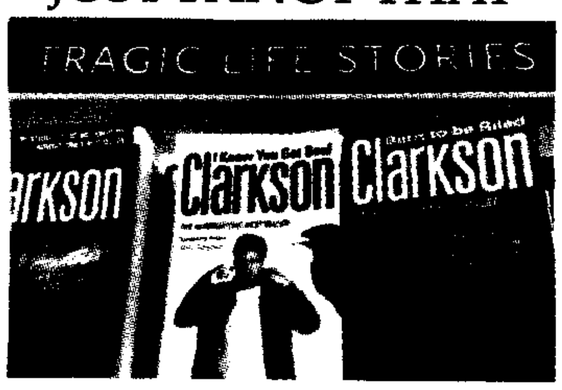
■ "THE *Mail on Sunday*'s art critic, Philip Hensher, has been shortlisted for the prestigious Man Booker prize for his novel, *The Northern Clemency*," crowed the *MoS* on its inside page at the weekend.

So proud of Hensher was the paper that it devoted not a single word to reviewing his novel when it was published earlier in the year.

'Bookworm'

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE DICKIE, WE'RE ONLY BUYING YOUR BOOK!
LORD ATTENBOROUGH BOOK SIGNING
ENTIRELY UP TO YOU DARLING
XTRA LARGE TISSUES

JUST FANCY THAT



WH Smith, Northampton

Why oh Wyoming

Fine Just The Way It Is
Annie Proulx
(Fourth Estate, £14.99)

DEAR ME, *how* the English critics love Ms Annie Proulx. Every three years or so, whenever Wyoming's first lady files one of her despatches from the prairie front line, the broadsheet arts section are suddenly aflame with the cries of admiring suburbanite reviewers, all completely beguiled by the rugged chastity of her prose style and the tribes of ground-down ranch-dwellers snuffed into extinction beneath her remorseless gaze.

"To find the pulse of humanity in such desperate lives betokens a writer of genius," gushed the chap in the *Daily Telegraph* last time around, and that just about sums it up.

You get the idea? Ms Proulx's acclaim – and not even her rival Cormac McCarthy does better over here – rests on a presumption of authenticity, an ability to tell it like it is, out there in a place where most of her readers have never been. And yet, curiously enough, the creative intelligence that sat down to write the stories assembled in *Fine Just The Way It Is*, looks quite as mannered and ultimately decadent as any *fin de siècle* aesthete penning a sonnet to his boyfriend's ear-lobe. Approximately half the pieces on display here – in particular "Them Old Cowboy Songs", "Tits-Up In A Ditch" and "The Great Divide" – are as taut and unaffectedly tragic as anything in contemporary American literature. The other half are... let's just say that, in common with any literary career heading towards its quarter-century, stylisation has set in with a vengeance.

How so? First, the silly names, a feature of the Proulx landscape since the very early days, have now turned completely ridiculous. People – even the denizens of the Wyoming steak-house underclass – are just not called Forrie Winkta, Chauncey Mellowhorn, Fenk Fipps, Mizpah Fur or, best of all, Hiawatha, Hamilcar and Seneca Alcorn, and the front-of-house absurdity limits the appeal of the characters trying to escape from behind the stage-curtain.

The same sense of a fixation pushed beyond its natural limit can be detected in the procession of terrible deaths: the ranchers who tumble down wells as regularly as a coyote howls out in the sagebrush; the venturesome egg-collector who gets his eye pecked out by a great blue heron guarding its nest. Like a Dodge convertible cruising along the interstate freeway, nearly all these miserable ends can be seen a mile off, and the determinism starts to grate.

The numinous, too, is encroaching big-time on to the set. Two of the stories here are whimsical little escapades featuring the Devil and his demonic secretary Duane Fork. "The Sagebrush Kid" stars a kind of prairie triffid, gobbling up anyone who loiters beneath its shade. Finally comes a hint of that absolutely fatal hankering for good old fashioned *fain* writing. Here is Helen Alcorn, listlessly surveying the plot her husband Hi has just bought off smooth-talking Mr Antip Bewley: "Her voice was so light she seemed to have inhaled a ribbon of cloud and to float out her words on its gauzy remnants." Inhaled a what? Its gauzy who? Sure, destiny supervenes, Hi gets kicked in the leg by a horse and dies of a blood clot on the final page, but this kind of flourish makes a feller nervous.

Needless to say, all this is a very bad sign. Rarely, in fact, will any unsuspecting reader, lured by a promise of the authentically down-home and the elementally stark, have come across anything quite so redolent of the creative writing seminar and the waste-paper basket guttering with rejected drafts. Half of the prose seems to have sprung unhindered from some well-spring deep within her, and the other half – not to put too fine a point on it – looks as if it was worked to death. These signs of degeneration in Ms P's work should be stoutly resisted: to adapt the title – which refers to the state (and the state) of Wyoming itself, she was fine just the way she was.

REMAINDERS OF THE DAY

THE BOOK: *Speaking for Myself*, by Cherie Blair, published by Little, Brown on 15 May 2008.

THE PRICE: £18.99.

NOW AVAILABLE: At the Brighton branch of The Works for just £3.99.

LIBRARY NEWS

■ AS librarians prepare to move into the shiny six floors of coloured glass that is the new Library for Cardiff, they face that often-asked question: should we take all these books with us? After all, they are rather old.

Yes, Cardiff council is planning to sell off up to 18,000 valuable library items dating back to the 15th century, including early printed books and atlases. An initial batch of 139 is currently being examined by auctioneer Bonhams and is likely to go under the hammer later this year. More items will follow, but they are being released slowly to avoid swamping the market.

The city collected most of the books in the 19th century, when Cardiff planned to host a National Library of Wales. But the National Library is now in Aberystwyth and the council says that creating appropriate storage for a rare book collection in Cardiff would cost more than £2m and that many of the books need expensive conservation.

An extraordinary report to councillors, asking them to approve the sale, describes the rare books as "surplus stock". It says the money raised should be spent on "priority projects" such as radio-chipping all the books for public lending and describes the move as "19th century investments paying dividends in terms of 21st century service delivery".

Siôn Tudur, of the Cardiff Heritage Friends Campaign, which is considering a legal challenge to the sell off, told the *Eye*: "The new computers, however new they are, will be out-of-date within five years. But you'll never get the books back."

Wapping is not only important as a physical site, but also it is a symbol of how bold individuals, working together, can advance the world of media and thereby contribute to life in Britain. Throughout our history, News Corporation has challenged conventions and we hope this building will provide benefits to the business that can't be found in traditional commercial real estate. We have chosen to create an exciting campus that is flexible, environmentally sustainable and where colleagues can do the best work of their lives.

JAMES MURDOCH explaining why the NI HQ will be staying in Wapping.

In the studio there's myself and five on the pass. I put all the food on the plates, I control the service, I orchestrate it all. There's no software, it's all in my head. I tell you, it's like Saving Private Ryan. The film starts, they're on the landing boats going to Omaha beach and you know what's coming: the first lot get mullered, bullets from the Germans. It's like that down at the pass, just waiting, and you know it's coming.

Award-winning pub chef STEPHEN TERRY of The Hardwick, Abergavenny, *The Times*

Pseuds Corner

In 1967, the year in which Fabio Capello left his first club, SPAL of Ferrara, to join Roma and the big time, his compatriot Germano Celant, a prominent art critic, gave a name – Arte Povera, or "poor art" – to the activity of a group of young artists who assembled their work from scrap material and other bric-a-brac. According to a new biography of Capello, this was the first kind of art in which England's new manager showed an interest; subsequently, as his career brought him wealth, he became a collector.

Arte Povera's principal source of inspiration was the work of Marcel Duchamp, and in the opening phase of his time as England's manager Capello may have feared that he was being invited to reproduce the great Dadaist's most famous act: taking a urinal and calling it a fountain. Last night, however, he added a gold fitting to a humble appliance.

Theo Walcott's splendidly assured hat-trick made it impossible to avoid the obvious historical parallel.

RICHARD WILLIAMS, *Guardian*

After 5 p.m. the gallery is turned into a restaurant so there is a different ambience. At night our 12-screen video projections have no sound, and work can be challenging – like caraballo-farman, who presented their work *Epididymis*, which showed one of their testicles being filmed continuously, which created an abstract film of different colours with weird organic forms.

VICTORIA BROOKS, curator of the Sketch Gallery, *Independent*

My goal is to take Pom Pom International to different areas of conflict around the globe, be it arguing neighbours in Aylesbury or rock throwers in the Gaza Strip. Dealing with differences is much easier with a stress-busting pompom in your hand. Making a pompom for peace may appear frivolous but it touches people in a profound way. Craft connects us to our primeval human need to create and express ourselves.

AMY LAME, *The Times*

CONTRIBUTORS: Anon., Patrick Campbell, Strobes, Derek Collett, Alasdair Davidson.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

LOCKERBIE APPEAL

What price justice?

In BBC2's recent *Conspiracy Files* about the blowing-up of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie Richard Marquise, the FBI agent who headed the US side of the investigation 20 years ago, emphatically denied that any reward money had been paid to witnesses.

In reply to a claim by Edwin Bollier, the boss of a Swiss company said to have manufactured the timing device used in the bomb, that he had been offered money by the FBI, Marquise said: "I can promise you we offered everyone who was involved in the case the exact same – nothing. They were never offered anything for their testimony, for their information concerning this case."

Clearly this was a case of the left hand of American law enforcement not knowing what the right was up to because Majid Giaka, the "star" witness at the trial of the two Libyans originally accused of the bombing, was handsomely rewarded by the CIA.

Readers of Paul Foot's special report on the atrocity may remember that a series of internal CIA cables about Giaka – a proven liar and cheat who claimed he was in Libyan intelligence when in fact he merely repaired their cars – showed that agents themselves thought he was a man of little credibility. But these were originally withheld from the 2001 trial of Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi and his co-accused, Al-Amin Khalifah Fhimah (who was acquitted by the Scottish judges). Those same judges agreed that Giaka's evidence – that he saw the pair with a large brown case at Luqa, the Maltese airport – was "at best grossly exaggerated and at worst untrue", and "largely motivated by financial considerations".

Curiously in convicting Megrahi, however, they never questioned why the prosecution should rely on such a corrupt and desperate liar and overlooked the fact that the names of both defendants had come from Giaka in the first place. Instead, they relied on the only other evidence that incriminated Megrahi: his identification 11 years after the event by Tony Gauci, the Maltese shopkeeper who said he sold him the 13 items of clothing that were packed round the bomb. But Gauci had seen a picture of Megrahi only a few days before he made the crucial identification. This too was withheld from the trial.

Inconsistencies and doubts surrounding Gauci's identification now form one of the six grounds outlined by the Scottish criminal cases review commission (SCCRC) for concluding Megrahi may be the victim of a miscarriage of justice. There were unconfirmed reports that part of the concerns outlined in the confidential 80-page SCCRC submission were that Gauci too was paid a large amount of CIA "compensation".

And for final confirmation that the Americans paid out money, the "Rewards for Justice" website of the US state department outlines the Lockerbie case. It says it has "paid more than $72m to over 50 people who have provided information that prevented international terrorist attacks or brought to justice those involved in prior acts".

DEVELOPMENT AID

The China syndrome

RULES supposed to ensure that publicly-owned international development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, supports parts of the world that struggle to attract investment are in fact enabling the fund's millionaire managers to plough money into much more profitable businesses elsewhere – to their own great personal enrichment.

The ministers and executives who have turned the 60-year-old public corporation that once invested in worthwhile development projects into a highly lucrative private equity operation (*Eyes passim*) insist the purpose is to show the rest of the world that investment in poor countries can work. As former development secretary Hilary Benn once explained, CDC sought "to show that responsible investments can be made in markets that investors too often shun as risky".

It was for this reason CDC was required to invest at least 70 percent of its funds in "poorer" countries, defined as having per capita income of less than $1,750 and to make 50 percent of its new investments in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, areas with the greatest difficulty attracting capital. The department for international development (DfID) still claims CDC "aims to invest where others are generally unwilling to do so".

Happily for CDC chief executive Richard Laing, whose £1m-plus pay packet depends largely on profits rather than development (see *Eye 1213*), these limits don't pose much of a constraint. Two hugely lucrative markets he can invest in are India and China; both are "poorer" countries and India is in South Asia.

Investment returns, on the other hand, are far from poor. Official indexes showed returns of 63 percent for China and 71 percent for India in 2007. Small wonder that last year CDC committed £353m to Asia (a 104 percent increase), against £153m to Africa (a 37 percent decrease) where returns are much lower.

This summer the fund announced a further $105m to China and $435m to India. Much of the investment will be made through CDC's privatised fund management arm Actis under another £1m-a-year man, Paul Fletcher. As chief executive of CDC in 2004, Fletcher sold Actis to himself and colleagues for a pittance (*Eyes passim*) and under the private equity arrangements will now take a share on any profits from the investments. Africa, where the real need to demonstrate successful investment lies, saw commitments of $150m - or a third of that going to China and India.

Far from shunning China and India, other investors are battling to get into these markets too. Both attract around $10bn a year from private equity firms. Thus there is no need for cash from a publicly-owned development fund committed to invest where "others are generally unwilling to" – unless you're Messrs Laing, Fletcher and co and your bonuses are determined by profits.

AVOIDABLE DEATH

Lethal silence

ALMOST five years to the day after 91-year-old Edna Alker was given a lethal dose of potassium chloride at Whiston Hospital in Merseyside, an inquest into her death will get under way at the end of this month.

Her family hope finally to learn how a student nurse working in the high-dependency unit was able to administer the chemicals in a case which has been shrouded in secrecy. Police, the crown prosecution service (CPS), health chiefs and the university where the nurse was studying all undertook investigations. But only parts of the police reports have been made available to the family – and none of the others.

Mrs Alker had been moved to the Whiston at the request of her daughter, Dr Gillian Edwards, who was a consultant anaesthetist there and naturally believed her mother would receive the best care.

Although elderly, Mrs Alker was fit and active and recovering from surgery for a survivable intestinal lesion when it was decided her potassium levels needed boosting. But instead of a slow infusion over several hours, the chemicals were injected straight into her bloodstream, causing heart failure. She died in the high-dependency unit on 26 September 2003.

Cheshire and Merseyside strategic health authority commissioned an independent report by the Emergency Care Research Institute (ECRI). No one has been allowed to see it, but Dr Edwards was told that there were some criticisms of practice within the unit.

The nurse who made the fatal injection was a student at Liverpool's John Moores University. Ironically she had received specific training in the potentially lethal effects of potassium chloride. Dr Edwards questioned the effectiveness of this training and the university eventually undertook an investigation. So far it, too, has refused to share its conclusions.

Dr Edwards told the *Eye*: "I have never been baying for blood. This was a terrible, terrible mistake. But I want to know how it could happen and I want to know if lessons have been learned and if changes in practice have taken place. I want to know exactly how and why my mother died."

BT SURVEILLANCE

Bad Phorm

POLICE have questioned BT staff about illegal snooping on their broadband users while testing new advertising technology.

Inspector Knacker needs to secure a warrant before carrying out covert profiling of people's internet activity, which counts as a wiretap; but BT secretly tested the Phorm advertising system on 18,000 customers in 2006.

Shares in Phorm, the online ad technology firm, rocketed on 5 September following news that it had made "significant" progress towards a trial via BT; but just days later came news that could give investors cold feet. City of London CID questioned staff at BT over their earlier trials of the technology which tracks broadband users' internet use in order to provide targeted advertising. The company also has agreements with TalkTalk and Virgin Media.

City of London CID has not yet launched a formal investigation into Phorm and says it is investigating "whether any criminal offence has been committed". Presumably, however, police have at least now read the documents handed over by anti-Phorm protestors in July. These included the internal documents about the 2006 trial, which stated that customers were not aware they were "participants" in the trial.

Legal advice to privacy campaigners at the Foundation for Information Policy Research says that deploying Phorm would be a breach of section 1 of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act. Meanwhile, the home office's own guidance says Phorm would be legal *only* if broadband users give their explicit consent to being monitored by the technology. In June, the European Commission pushed the UK government to investigate whether Phorm breaks European data protection laws.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk

HEALTH CHECK

MEDICINE BALLS

Danger: GPs at work

HOW safe is general practice? No one really knows, because no one collects any data.

The National Patient Safety Agency has a national reporting and learning system (NRLS) for near misses and cock-ups anywhere in the NHS. It's confidential and voluntary, supposedly to encourage participation. Of the 80,000 reports it receives each month, 5 percent come from community pharmacies and 1 percent from GPs. Considering that 90 percent of healthcare occurs outside hospitals, it's a pisspoor effort.

There is good evidence from the airline industry, and increasingly from hospitals, that the more errors you report, the less likely you are to harm people. This seems counter-intuitive but organisations that collect, analyse and learn from minor errors are far better at preventing serious ones.

Many GP practices have audit meetings behind closed doors, where they discuss complaints, deaths and any bodge-ups that may have been spotted. This is generally done in a supportive, no-blame manner, even when there's clear evidence that someone has made a rudimentary error. And the error is hardly ever reported, least of all by a GP. Most of the NRLS reports from primary care are about vaccination, suggesting they come from nurses.

All clinical staff make mistakes and the error count is rising as medicine becomes more complex. But without a systematic way to pick up and learn from errors, it's likely that the same ones keep repeating themselves. Recently, M.D. attended a Medicine Safety in Practice conference in Manchester which discussed prescribing errors so serious that they couldn't be hidden. The first concerned a man on long-term warfarin therapy to reduce his risk of a stroke. He also suffered from arthritis. Everyone in the room knew what was going to happen. He was going to take a pain killer that would interact with the warfarin, and suffer a catastrophic bleed.

So how did it happen? The patient saw a locum GP on a morning when the computer crashed. The locum didn't know him or ask about his other medication before giving him a prescription for a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). His usual pharmacy had a big Christmas queue so he went to an unfamiliar chemist who also didn't check his medication. And his blood test at the warfarin clinic was delayed because of the holidays. He went home, ate some turkey and had a massive stomach bleed.

Most examples showed how heavily GPs rely on their computer to prevent cock-ups, and how simply errors can occur: a consultant mumbled the name of a drug – triamcinolone – into a tape recorder and it was wrongly transcribed as methotrexate. Not even close. The letter was sent to the GP unchecked. The GP issued a prescription. The pharmacist queried it but was satisfied when the receptionist read the letter back to her. The drug was given as an injection by the practice nurse who didn't realise it was cytotoxic (ie able to kill healthy tissue) and got her decimal point in the wrong place, giving 10 times the dose. The nurse realised her latter mistake, got the patient into A&E and reported the error. The primary care trust has now banned cytotoxic injections in primary care and offered medicine safety training, which GPs are too busy to attend.

For patients, the best chance of avoiding drug errors is to know what drugs you're taking, what the side effects are and what you can, and can't, take with them. And check the name and dose with whoever is about to inject you. Avoiding misdiagnosis or substandard treatment is harder, but patients now have free access to the Map of Medicine via the NHS Choices website (www.nhs.uk). This is a superb distillation of the treatment you should be getting. If you ask nicely, your GP should be able to access it during the consultation, so you can prevent an error happening rather than join the 10 percent of patients who are harmed by their treatment.* Good luck!

M.D.

** An estimate extrapolated from a few studies. No one knows the true scale of medical error*

NHS PLC

King's ransom?

KEEN observers of the creeping takeover of the NHS by private sector managers and accountants will have been surprised to note a new name among the "consultancy" firms flogging their wares to unsuspecting health bosses.

A shortlist of seven consortiums has been selected from no fewer than 225 applicants applying for contracts to help England's primary care trusts (PCTs) spend their combined £75bn-plus budgets for so-called "world class commissioning" of healthcare. The favoured, not surprisingly, include three of the "big four" accountancy firms – the same ones that have already picked up fat fees for helping to sign up dozens of NHS trusts for extortionately-priced PFI hospital schemes and which are also doing very nicely from contracts to "turn around" the finances of cash-strapped trusts and PCTs.

But it is the group led by city slickers Ernst & Young and our old friend UnitedHealth which has really raised eyebrows, because it has signed up none other than the King's Fund, which boasts of being "an independent charitable foundation working for better health".

According to the fund's own website, it aims "to help develop informed policy, by undertaking original research and providing objective analysis" with no mention of its new fat cat partners, who are committed to and profit greatly from the new NHS marketplace.

The fund's slice of the action may ensure healthy balance sheets, but it raises a question mark over its supposed independence and objective analysis and may explain its muted criticism of the government's relentless privatisation of the NHS.

A fund spokesman said: "The fund is very careful when working with other organisations that its independent status is not compromised in anyway. The reality is that commercial organisations have an increasingly important role to play in the emerging healthcare market. We should look to use their expertise and ensure it helps PCTs and others develop and provide higher quality care to patients."

So that's all right, then.

Foster on the roster

DR FOSTER Intelligence, the joint venture between the department of health's information centre and private health information company Dr Foster, goes from strength to strength with its appointment alongside consultants KPMG to advise all 152 English primary care trusts on health service commissioning.

The firm was created in 2006 through what parliament's public accounts committee last year described as a "back room deal" that cost the taxpayer around £4m over the odds for its 50 percent share. By a remarkable coincidence, the government's adviser on the deal, whose fees escalated from an anticipated £285,000 to £2m, was a certain KPMG. Now the consultants can clean up again from their handiwork through the commissioning contract, to which they promise to "bring financial and commercial rigour and strategic insight".

Equally pleased with the contract is the department of health commissioning director who awarded it to the Dr Foster/KPMG team, Mark Britnell. Until recently he was a non-executive director of... Dr Foster, and is said to be on very friendly terms with Dr Foster chairman Tim Kelsey.

Cool for CATS

MORE on controversial private health firm Care UK, which has won a major contract in Manchester. The government won't reveal the figures, but it is believed the company will receive £130m under the "Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services" (CATS) scheme.

In return Care UK is expected to set up shop in trailers outside town halls and leisure centres to diagnose and treat 80,000 patients a year with orthopaedic, rheumatology, general surgery, ear nose and throat, gynaecology and urology problems.

Though this marks a big step forward for Care UK (its main experience is running old people's homes), it has tried to move into the NHS before with, ahem, limited success.

Last year, for example, the department of health (DoH) gave it a groundbreaking independent sector contract to take over a whole hospital, the Lymington, in the New Forest. In addition it had a less spectacular contract to run diagnostic services for the NHS in the West Midlands.

Alas, last November health secretary Alan Johnson scrapped the Lymington deal (to the relief of nurses) before it began because it was "unlikely to provide acceptable value for money". And he terminated the West Midlands contract "because of an unacceptably low rate of use (5 percent utilisation to date), and a very low prospect of the utilisation increasing which represents poor value for money to the taxpayer".

The failures were no problem for Care UK, which was paid off for its work and allowed to win another lucrative deal in Manchester.

"I don't like the look of your postcode"

In the City

THE British sub-prime market provided a small but significant microcosm of the US housing meltdown that has triggered the collapse of Wall Street investment bankers Lehman Brothers. Like the rescued Merrill Lynch and its more blue collar lending rivals GMAC and GE Money, Lehman was an aggressive player feeding the UK "sub-prime" mortgage lending boom and the related securitization of these toxic mortgages around the globe.

During 2006 – as the "sub-prime" boom peaked – Lehman securitized (ie sold on to bigger fools) almost £5bn of UK mortgages. This compared with £2.2bn in 2005. Lehman had boosted its presence in the UK "sub-prime" market during 2006 by paying just over £1bn for London Mortgage Company from Matlock Bank. It is estimated that £30bn in "sub-prime" loans were made that year. So Lehman had a big market share of this poisoned pool. It was also a lender to rival lenders such as Northern Rock and Alliance & Leicester.

Its main operator in the UK market, Southern Pacific Mortgage, had securitized £5.8bn of UK mortgages by November 2006 – the latest figures available. For its junior partner Preferred Mortgages the figure was £2.1bn. This near £8bn total compared with £4.6bn in 2005.

The Lehman twins, like their American rivals, relied heavily on brokers to bring them customers who were unlikely to be welcomed by high street lenders. They also applied the aggressive business model and tactics American lenders brought to the UK, targeting not just those borrowers who had bad credit histories but also those in the "Alt-A" category, just above "sub-prime".

But so bad was the picture by this summer that Lehman either could not or would not estimate the extent of the damage. The 2006 accounts of its "sub-prime" lenders Southern Pacific and Preferred were both filed way after the legal deadline in July and May this year. They had been overdue since September 2007 – three months after the bomb went off inside rival Bear Stearns marking the start of the credit crunch and a year after Northern Rock imploded.

Both companies' financial year-ends were November 2006. Yet in late July this year the Southern Pacific directors and auditors Ernst & Young felt no need to reflect the way the entire "sub-prime" universe had changed since that time. Even though by then Lehman had closed down its "sub-prime" business in the UK. Southern Pacific and Preferred both stopped originating "sub-prime" loans in April faced with the drying up of the wholesale money markets with the disappearance of any appetite for mortgage backed securities.

However, despite the usual audit requirement to disclose any post-balance sheet date event that is significant enough to adjust or impact on those very historic figures, neither Southern Pacific nor Preferred felt it necessary to attempt to calculate the seismic effect on their now ceased business of the end of life as they once very profitably knew it.

Both companies' accounts were prepared on a "going concern" basis, meaning they had enough financial strength and backing to survive another 12 months to November 2007. At the time the 2006 accounts were signed – 22 May (Preferred) and 24 July (Southern Pacific) in 2008 – this was a statement of the bleeding obvious. But in May and July 2008, was that really still the case? Given the Chapter XI filing by the parent last weekend and the consequent appointment of administrators in the UK, it was at most a little optimistic.

So what did the directors, almost all employed by Lehman, have to say about the state of affairs at their holed and sinking companies?

Southern Pacific states baldly that "whilst *it is not possible to quantify the financial impact on the company at this stage* [my italics], the directors expect the principal activity of the company (originations) to cease in late 2008". Well, they got that one right.

But did they really not have a clue about the cost of the credit crunch, the end of "sub-prime", the higher than average slump in the values of the houses upon which such loans had been made and the increase in defaults, arrears and repossessions in the months since Northern Rock needed a taxpayer rescue? If they did, there were no figures in the post balance sheet event note.

Instead all that was admitted was that the company had ceased mortgage originations ("sub-prime" lending) and a repeat of that remarkable statement: *"It is not possible to quantify the financial impact on the company at this stage."*

Could not or would not 20 months after the year-end? Presumably those same directors were able to come up with some figures for the proposed deal with asset managers BlackRock who last week agreed to buy $4bn worth of this rubbish as part of Lehman's last desperate throw to avoid collapse. This deal was supposed to eliminate up to 90 percent of Lehman's exposure to UK "sub-prime" mortgages. But as it was supposed to part-finance the deal, will it now go through?

The same "we know nothing" formulation appeared in the smaller Preferred accounts in April. Once again the post balance sheet note was silent on the extent of that impact, despite the previous "contingent liability" note emphasizing the bill to be paid if the mortgages turned bad.

However, there were liabilities regarding the underlying mortgages as the "contingent liability" note in both companies' accounts made clear. "Upon each loan sale the company issues a warranty that all mortgages being sold are compliant with various representations… such as the level of arrears existing at sale, the ratio of loan to property value". And if that criteria was not met? "The company is required to repurchase at par value those mortgages that do not meet the criteria". Something that those who bought them will no doubt now be seeking to rely on in a bid to cover their losses.

No doubt Lehman will claim that all was well when it sold the mortgages and that it is not responsible for failing to anticipate the biggest financial storm since the great crash of 1929.

Ernst & Young can quite justifiably say that what appears in the accounts and what does not is ultimately a matter for the directors not the auditor. So if the directors said they could not estimate the "sub-prime" bill – perhaps because it was rising too fast – then who were E&Y to argue? They are only the auditors, not the mortgage lenders and sellers. But given the state of the "sub-prime" business, ie dead, in mid 2008, was this really a "true and fair view" of the position of the Lehman twins?

The bulk of this financial junk was sold on through an ever-growing number of special purpose vehicles (SPVs), which were in turn financed without recourse – the lenders waived their right to claim back on Lehman for any losses. There was £6bn of non-recourse borrowing at November 2006. Whether these arrangements will stand the test of the Lehman administration remains to be seen.

Had the impact of the credit crunch on the UK sub-prime mortgage securitization book been revealed through the two subsidiary companies accounts, this might not have been helpful at a time when Lehman was saying it would survive. At the end of May its total exposure to residential mortgages in the US and UK was $25bn. The BlackRock sale and other sales had reduced that exposure by the weekend to $13bn. The UK exposure in May could have been just under $10bn – the total shown for Europe.

Not that the problems weren't reflected to a degree even in the 2006 accounts. Both companies increased their provisions for mortgage losses on securitized loans by a whole £6m! Those loans totalled £5.8bn at the year-end with total provisions of just £52m or less than 1 percent! Arrears and repossessions on "sub-prime" loans are generally running at several times that figure now with worse to come.

The Lehman UK mortgages were sold on through more than 20 SPVs under the Southern Pacific and Preferred banners but also under names such as Eurosail. During 2006 Southern Pacific did no fewer than six securitizations for £3.7bn. The smallest was £376m and the largest £855m.

These were, as the parent company accounts make clear, "all legally and beneficially owned by charitable trusts" – the same dodge used by Northern Rock, Bradford & Bingley and other British banks in their securitization programme.

Charities are often used in the UK as beneficiaries of last resort for offshore trusts. Northern Rock used a Jersey trust to anchor its Granite securitization programme. Whether the charities have received or will ever receive any donation remains to be seen. The usual deal is that that only happens when the trust or its purpose has ended – if there is anything left to pay.

Just who the Lehman SPV charities are is not immediately clear. The SPVs often go back to the London offices of Wilmington Trust, the Delaware-based financial services group. Delaware is the US's very own homegrown answer to offshore tax havens.

Delaware is also home to the ultimate Lehman parent company – Lehman Brothers Holdings.

After Northern Rock and now Lehman, perhaps it is time for the Charity Commission to look at this use and potential abuse of charities to facilitate financial engineering. When charities were used in tax avoidance schemes during the 1970s this was stopped – but then the taxman was also on the case.

The UK "sub-prime" business may have helped to bring Lehman down, but it was good to the bank while it lasted. Southern Pacific paid dividends totaling of £26m for 2005 and 2006. Preferred paid a £25m dividend for 2006 and £3.4m in 2004.

One of the Lehman vehicles was Yellow Brick Road Direct Mortgages. There is likely to be a great deal of pain for Lehman's mortgage borrowers and creditors at the end of that road.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

95% Plunge in Lehman Brothers' share price prior to filing for bankruptcy this week

573% Percentage of salary that Lehman Brothers CEO Richard Fuld received as performance-related bonus in March, taking his total pay packet to $22.1m

THE TRIUMPH OF CAPITALISM

THE revelation that accountants KPMG stopped being bean-counters in residence at failed tour operator XL Leisure Group almost two years ago is revealing if only because the firm was prepared to publicly state why it was resigning – "financial irregularities… misrepresentations by directors… material errors". Such candour is rare. The last similar example, which was also followed by disaster, was RBG Resources where PriceWaterhouse-Coopers blew the whistle and waved goodbye in 2002. Earlier thus year three RBG directors were jailed for fraud.

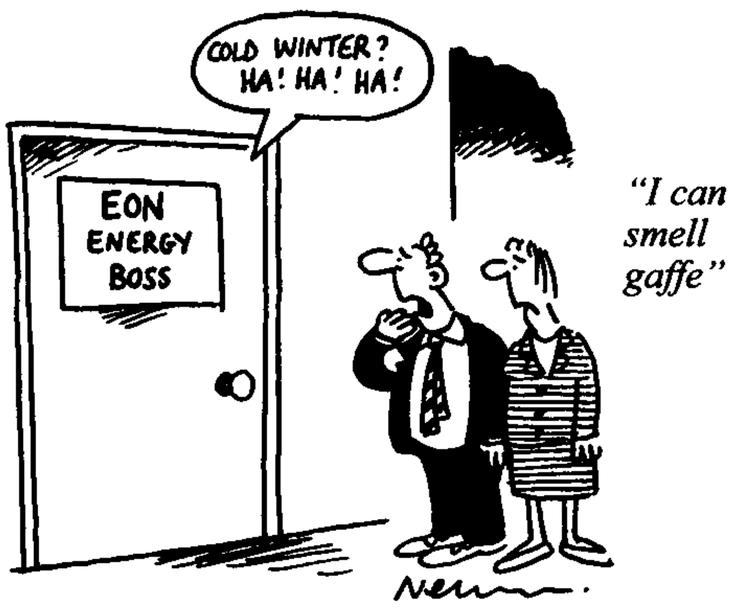
Often auditors lie through their Mont Blancs and file a letter saying there is no reason for shareholders or creditors to be concerned about their resignation. Now they are allowed/ encouraged to be more truthful but it will interesting to see whether they are.

KPMG had only been auditor for a little more than a year when it resigned in October 2006. This followed the revelation that XL had persuaded Alpha Airports to hold back bills until after the end of its 2005 financial year, thereby boosting profits ahead of the listing of XL's parent on the Icelandic stock market.

KPMG, which had signed the 2005 accounts, were replaced by BDO Stoy Hayward – which itself had resigned in July of the previous year stating (no doubt truthfully) there was no ground for concern.

BDO did not qualify the subsequent 2006 accounts. But it probably insisted that the directors' report included the unusual statement that the directors had "taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any information needed by the company's auditors for the purposes of their audit and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information". The same formulation appeared in the 2007 accounts signed off only in May with the usual "true and fair view" mantra. Once bitten, twice concerned about the professional indemnity policy?

'Slicker'



"I can smell gaffe"

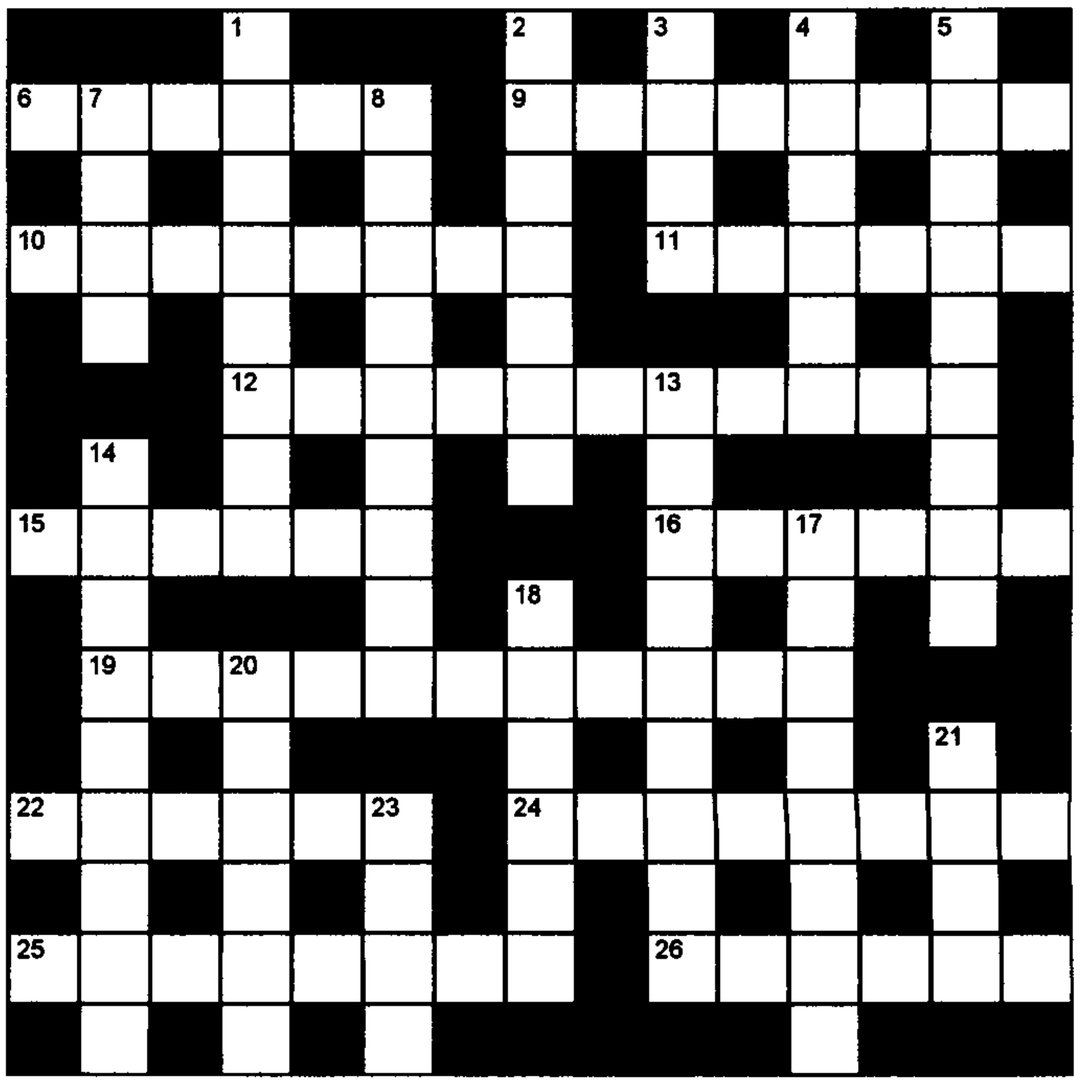
PLANET FOOTBALL

DR Sulaiman Al Fahim, front-man for the Abu Dhabi United Group which has just bought Manchester City football club, may seem a preposterous figure, with his extravagant talk of buying Cristiano Ronaldo from Manchester United for £135m and achieving world domination within months.

But he is also a profound business thinker. Here is Al Fahim's personal CEO's message on the website of his company Hydra Properties: "Real estate is a real property that is more or less immobile, but the human being is constantly in mutation. In Hydra Properties, our aim is to solve this paradox; how to succeed in making a property which is legally yours become your personal property. The task is difficult, I believe, because we are carrying in us a residue of a world picture that is essentially mechanical in nature – what we might call the mechanical-rationalist world picture. The task is difficult, I believe, but, if you watch raindrops fall off the tree, you can see that the tear-drop shape is formed over time and couldn't get the shape any other way. If you watch real estate industry growth today, you can see that the process over time is changing to a more human one because it will not get the healthy growth any other way."

EYE CROSSWORD 374

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 26 September 2008

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

6 End of the socially superior junket for this representative (4-2)

9 It slows progress, sexual practice on bollocks (8)

10 *Sun*'s misplaced exclamation (one coming *before* Boris) – cool (8)

11 Madness, having an 'accident' inside girl (6)

12 Managing to get a shag – not Clinton in 2008! (7,4)

15 Leave Earth creating a stink (3,3)

16 Cleaner Virginia shifting endless mucus (6)

19 Scenting an opening, yes-man style? (5-6)

22 Poles (a pair) sticking tip in two Poles (6)

24 Examine couples' briefs (8)

25 Tabloid dropping leader on Labour's chief ("pisspoor bad") (8)

26 Openly gay and keen to produce public disapproval (6)

DOWN

1 Woman-chaser needs tool doctored with hot air forced inside! (8)

2 "Mad party scramble" jibe (7)

3 See 23dn.

4 The country gives minister – finally – stick over exam marking? (6)

5 Roused from slumber the old-fashioned way in the club (7,2)

7 Girl gobbling large hard part of member (4)

8 Piss-taking, that's Joy after screwing (6,3)

13 Taste shown by Grant having sex with a goat – not half! (4,2,1,2)

14 Matey Blair accepting ugly mob on street – over one's dead body! (9)

17 Deliberate act to get pissed: Cyclops not troubled initially (8)

18 Stowed away in UFOs, silly old thing! (6)

20 Mechanic's companion painting prison? (6)

21 Member of the House piss poor – no shit! (4)

23/3 Well over 12 in. testicle needed for this US game (8)

Crossword 373 winner: CHRISTOPHER ELLIS

ACROSS: 1 Let go 4 Chelsea 9 Bugger off 10 Erupt 11/3 Letting one rip 12 Smash up 13 Aura 14 Fuddy-duddy 18 Breast pump 22 Abysmal 25 No-balls 26 Sahib 27 Dismember 28 Sworn in 29 Today.

DOWN: 1 Lobelia 2 Tight-arse 4 Cuffs 5 Eye candy 6/19 Slush fund 7 Autopsy 8 Long jump 15 Diminish 16 Double bed 17/24 Osama Bin Laden 18 Brasses 20 Destroy 21 Object 23 Yahoo.

HUSBAND

Hey, Where've you been all my life?
Oh you know, care homes, borstals, prisons...
... Oh, and the last few years in a psychiatric hospital

www.koreanair.com

From departure to arrival, witness the creation of your own private room

Excellence in Space Equipped with personal AVOD and a 180° reclining Kosmo Sleeper Seat, we've done justice to flying by providing space so private, it becomes your very own.

* The service outlined in this ad may not be available on certain flights

Excellence in Flight
KOREAN AIR

SAMSUNG

OMNIA

Everything in one touch

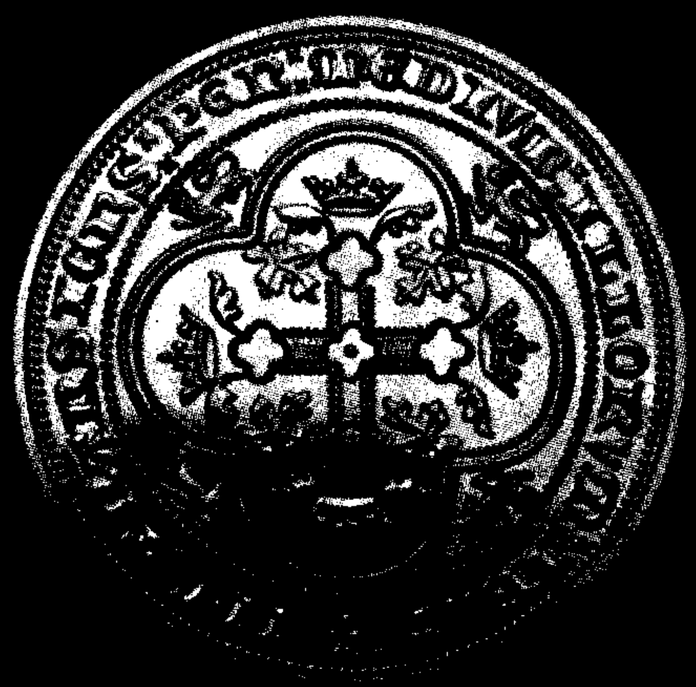
The new Samsung Omnia is more than a phone. A simple touch gives you higher speed internet access - HSDPA 7.2Mbps, GPS Navigation, email and a Movie Player with up to 32GB* memory. There's even a 5 megapixel camera and video calling. And as if that's not enough, it comes loaded with Windows Mobile 6.1 Professional, giving you full use of MS Office at your fingertips.

www.samsungmobile.co.uk/omnia

Windows Mobile

SAMSUNG

*Expandable memory option



OFFER FROM

THE
LONDON MINT
OFFICE

JOIN THE WORLD'S GOLD OWNERS WITH THIS EXCEPTIONAL OFFER FROM THE LONDON MINT OFFICE

A tribute to Britain's most valuable coin

The £460,000 Double Leopard in gold

YOURS FOR JUST £119

IN June 2006 a world record price of £460,000 was paid for a British coin. The coin was a gold 'Double Leopard' from the reign of King Edward III, and it was the ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND outside the British Museum.

Now you can own one of just 5,000 newly struck reproductions of this coin, each one in 22 carat gold and each one individually numbered and hallmarked to validate its authenticity. Best of all, you can own it for just £119 - a saving of £116 on our regular release price.

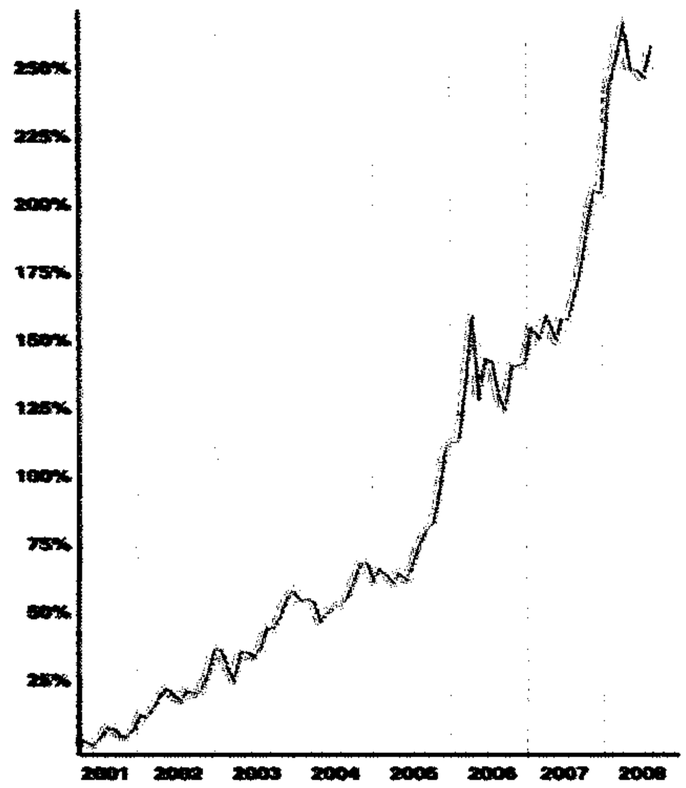
It's always good to own gold, and even better to own limited edition gold commemoratives. Over the last six years the price of gold has more than trebled in value, and continues its upward trend. In calendar year 2005 it grew 15.3%, in 2006 it grew a further 23.4% and in 2007 a further 27.6%. In 2008 to the end of July it has added almost 17% indicating it is on target again for another impressive year.*

A tribute to Britain's most valuable coin, the King Edward III Double Leopard, can be your introduction to this exciting series and you can apply for this now at just £119 - which is a £116 saving on our regular price.

This is the first in The Millionaires Collection GOLD EDITION which is a collection of scale reproductions of some of our nation's most beautiful, and most valuable coins, all in solid 22 carat gold. If your application is successful you will receive further releases in this collection, always on approval and without obligation.

Some superb gifts accompany future releases including a fine wooden display case. You are under no obligation and can buy precisely the number of releases you choose to, and build a fine collection that both you and your family will be justifiably proud of.

- **A tribute to Britain's most valuable coin, the King Edward III Double Leopard**
- **This scale reproduction is an edition of just 5,000, each individually numbered**
- **Minted in solid 22 carat gold**
- **Available to you now for just £119 - a saving of £116 on our regular price**
- **Successful applicants will also receive further releases in The Millionaires Collection GOLD EDITION always on approval and without obligation and some fine gifts accompany these future releases**



GROWTH IN THE WORLD GOLD PRICE*

Make your application NOW call FREE on

0800 037 4321

Lines open Mon-Fri 9.00am-5.30pm
& Sat 9.00am-1.00pm.
Apply online at
www.londonmintoffice.org/spygold1
Offer closes 26 September 2008
and is subject to availability

* Source: World Gold Council average monthly price of gold per ounce in US dollars, March 2001 to July 2008. Past price increases should not necessarily be taken as an indication of future growth. Deliveries to UK mainland only. The London Mint Office Limited, Freepost The London Mint Office, London SW18 4LS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS

(1) Availability is restricted to one per UK household. (2) Applications will be given priority in the order in which they are received. To be considered for this offer applications should be made within 7 days. (3) Complete the coupon below or, apply online at www.londonmintoffice.org/spygold1, or for immediate confirmation, call The London Mint Office FREE now on 0800 037 4321. (4) Send no money with your application (5) There is no obligation to keep the product. Should you wish to return it, you may do so within 14 days.

Pre Reservation Application

☐ YES, I wish to apply for the scale reproduction of Britain's most valuable coin, the King Edward III Double Leopard one of just 5,000 minted and individually numbered, delivered to my UK mainland address, postage free, for only £119. I understand that only one application per household will be accepted, and that applications should be made within 7 days. I understand I will receive further products in The Millionaires Collection GOLD EDITION but always on approval and without obligation. I confirm I am over 18 years of age.

☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss

Please do not send any payment with this application

First Name _____ Surname _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Email _____ Tel _____

Applications are subject to status which may require a credit check through a licensed credit reference agency. Deliveries to UK mainland only. Please tick if you do not want to receive information regarding further important issues from The London Mint Office, ☐ or other carefully selected partners ☐

THE
LONDON MINT
OFFICE

To apply by telephone call FREE on
0800 037 4321
or apply online at
www.londonmintoffice.org/spygold1
Alternatively, send this coupon to us at
FREEPOST THE LONDON MINT OFFICE,
LONDON SW18 4LS
Offer closes 26 Sept 2008 and is subject to availability

Reservation number: 92001879

Applicants must be: 18 years or over

Application period ends: within 7 days

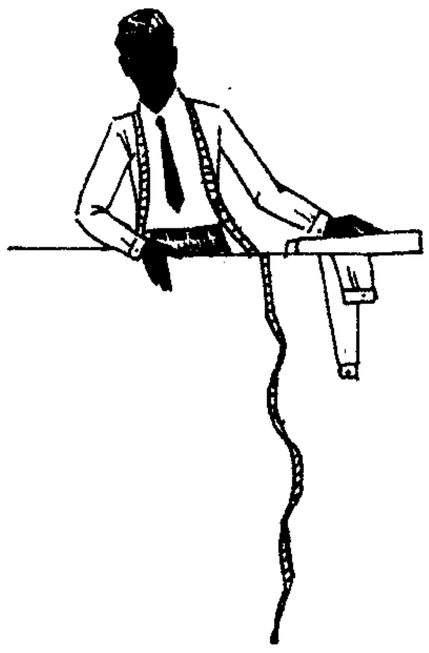
Approval: September 2008

Henry Herbert

HENRY HERBERT IS A SUIT AND SHIRT TAILORING COMPANY.
WE BELIEVE THAT IF A SHIRT OR SUIT DOESN'T FIT A LITTLE, IT DOESN'T FIT AT ALL.
OUR SERVICE COULD NOT BE SIMPLER.

WE SCOOTER TO YOU.

WE MEASURE YOU.



WE MAKE FOR YOU.

AND THEN DELIVER BACK TO YOU YOUR CUSTOM TAILORED, MADE TO MEASURE SHIRTS OR SUITS.
EACH EGYPTIAN COTTON SHIRT IS £49.99 AND EACH ENGLISH WOOL OR ITALIAN CASHMERE SUIT IS £375.00.

IF YOU ARE NOT AT ALL HAPPY, PLEASE LET US KNOW AND WE'LL COME STRAIGHT BACK (WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IS GOOD FOR YOU), FOR A SECOND FITTING AND ALTERATION AT NO COST WHATSOEVER.

TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

CALL
020 7727 2485

VISIT
WWW.HENRYHERBERT.COM

TEXT
07508 036228

BY APPOINTMENT TO
H.M THE QUEEN
SUPPLIERS OF MEAT AND POULTRY
DONALD RUSSELL (INVERURIE)

DONALD RUSSELL

AWARD WINNING

No meat is more delicious or tender than ours.

At Donald Russell, based in Aberbeenshire, we select only the very best naturally reared, fully matured, premium beef, lamb and pork.

Then we hang it that little bit longer – up to 21 days in fact, to allow the rich flavours to develop and for the meat to become incredibly juicy and tender.

It's then expertly cut by hand and trimmed to perfection into the finest cuts of delicious gourmet meat you've ever tasted.
So tender, each piece will melt in your mouth.

'Truly wonderful'
Nigella Lawson

'The best I've ever tasted'
Tom Parker Bowles

Juicy, tender, melt-in-the-mouth meat direct to your door.

A VERY SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER FOR YOU TO TRY

Enjoy 12-14 servings of our finest quality, naturally reared gourmet meat

JUST £59 EXCL. £4 DELIVERY **SAVE OVER 30%** Usually £85 (if all bought individually excluding delivery) YOU SAVE £26

FREE GIFTS Meat Cooking Guide & Chopping Board **WORTH £14.50**

Learn the secrets of cooking great meat with this UNIQUE 52 page booklet written by our Head Chef Stefan Kolsch

The Connoisseur Steak Box contains the finest Donald Russell cuts of meat & hand-made burgers

- **4 Sirloin Steaks** individually packed (minimum pack weight 210g)
- **2 Ribeye Steaks** individually packed (minimum pack weight 190g)
- **4 Fillet Medallions** in pack of 2 (minimum pack weight 140g)
- **4 Beef Mini-Steaks** in pack of 4 (minimum pack weight 200g)
- **12 Mini Gourmet Steak Burgers** in pack of 12 (minimum pack weight 540g)

YOUR GUARANTEE OF QUALITY
We promise you your full money back if not fully satisfied.

❄ We will professional shock-freeze your order at no extra charge, to help preserve the quality.

PLACE YOUR ORDER NOW ON 01467 629666

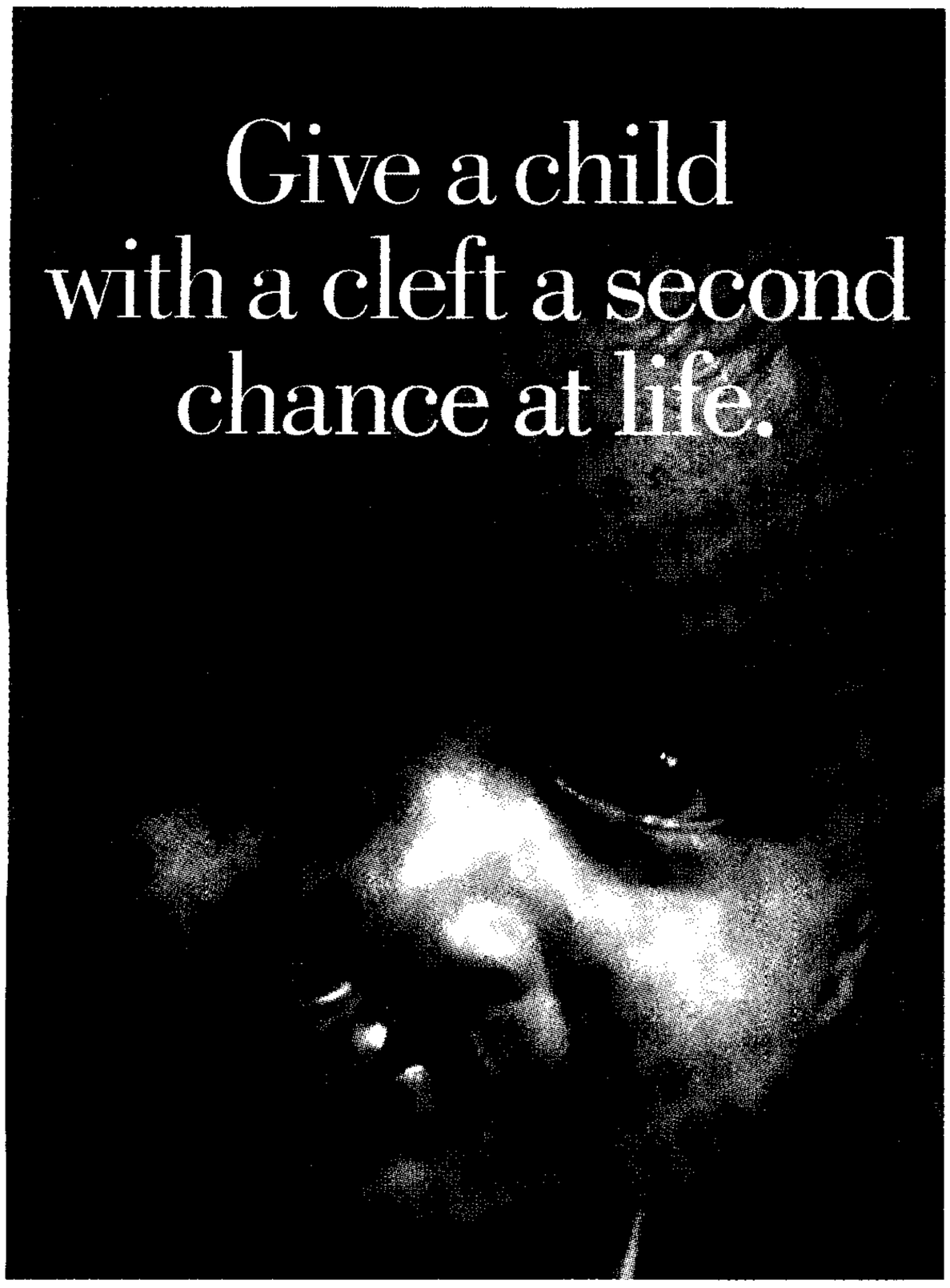
Or visit **www.donaldrussell.com/pveybo0809**

Donald Russell, Harlaw Road, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, AB51 4FR

Monday - Friday 8am - 8pm.
Saturday 9am - 4pm.
Sunday 10am - 4pm.

HELPLINE 01467 622044
CODE - PVEYBO0809

Give a child with a cleft a second chance at life.



Today, millions of children in developing countries are suffering with cleft lip and palate. Condemned to a lifetime of malnutrition, shame and isolation. The good news is virtually all of these children can be helped.
The Smile Train empowers local surgeons to provide life-changing free cleft surgery – which takes as little as 45 minutes and costs as little as £150.

It gives desperate children not just a new smile – but a new life.

I want to give a child a second chance at life.

☐ £150 Provides cleft surgery for one child.

☐ £30 Provides medications for one surgery.

☐ £75 Helps towards training a local surgeon.

☐ £_____ We'll gratefully accept any amount.

Mr/Mrs/Ms _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Email _____ Telephone _____

Charge my gift to my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Maestro

Card No. _____

Valid From _____ Exp. Date _____ Issue No. _____

Signature _____

☐ My cheque is enclosed, made payable to The Smile Train UK

Send this coupon with your donation to:
The Smile Train UK,
PO Box 583,
Northampton NN3 6UH

Z08091U075HAN06

SmileTrain
Changing The World One Smile At A Time.

giftaid it

☐ **Make every £1 of your gift worth 28p more for FREE.** I am a UK taxpayer and would like The Smile Train to reclaim tax, at no extra cost to myself, on all donations I have made within the last six years and any future donations, unless I notify you otherwise. You must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that The Smile Train reclaims on your donation in the tax year. Currently 28p for every £1 you give.

☐ These details, including your email address / telephone number, may be used to keep you informed about our future developments. If you do not want to receive such information please tick the box.

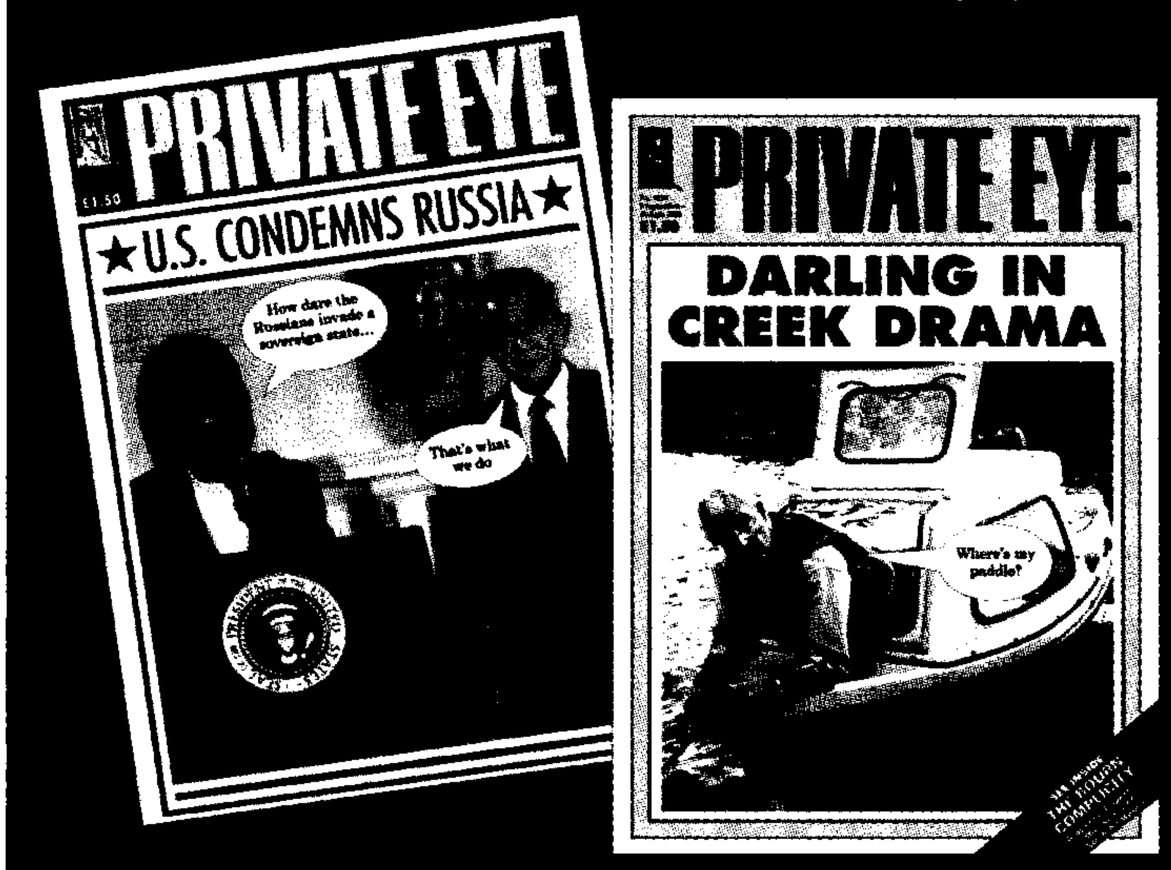
Make a secure donation online: www.smiletrain.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1114748

© 2008 The Smile Train.

SAVE MONEY BY BUYING PRIVATE EYE ON SUBSCRIPTION

You **SAVE £11.00** on the shop price



Only £28 for 26 issues

● FREE home delivery ● Never miss an issue
● Money back guarantee

Subscribe online at
www.subsonline.co.uk
or call our order hotline
01795 414 870
or complete the order form below and send with payment to:
PRIVATE EYE, PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA

☐ **Yes! I would like to subscribe to PRIVATE EYE for one year (26 issues).**
☐ UK £28 ☐ Europe (Airmail) £34 ☐ Rest of World (Airmail) £38

1 Your details: (for gift subscriptions – this is where we send the gift card)

Title Initial Surname

Address

Postcode Tel. no.

Email

☐ Yes, I would like to receive news of other products and services from Private Eye that may be of interest to me.

You may cancel at any time and receive a full refund on outstanding issues. PRIVATE EYE is serious about protecting your privacy. We do not share or sell data about our subscribers.

2 ☐ Gift subscription. Please send Private Eye to:

Title Initial Surname

Address

Postcode Tel. no.

3 Payment details:

☐ by Direct Debit – just call 01795 414 870 with your bank details
☐ by cheque made payable to PRIVATE EYE
☐ by credit card. Please debit my Visa Mastercard Switch

Card number:

Valid from Expiry date Switch issue no

Cardholder's signature _____ Date _____

SOURCE CODE: N1219

PRIVATE EYE

Advertise here and reach over 811,000 potential customers, it's so easy!

(Source: NRS, March 2008)

There are three ways to place your advertisement

www.eyeadvertise.co.uk ✆ **tel: 020 7240 9129** @ **email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com**

£2.75 per word (£25 min charge). Centred box £15. Box number £15. For just £10 extra your ad can also appear on our website: **www.eyeadvertise.co.uk** All charges inc VAT

Would advertisers please note that copy deadline for October 3rd issue will be 1pm, Tuesday, September 23rd

Eye Art

PSSST. WANNA BUY A BANKSY? Visit www.spitalfieldsartmarket.co.uk

ECLECTIC, wax to bronze and stone. Concepts realised.www.sculpturecentre.co.uk

BLUES, JAZZ, ROCK abstract original art at northern prices. Visit BBSMEMORABILIA.COM

SPORTS' ART, PRINTS, photographs, great moments, great presents. See www.intosport.co.uk Quote ORRELL for discount.

Eye Bet

PROFITABLE SUBSCRIPTION RACING service. Free trial. www.NewHorizonsRacing.com

Eye Wear

PUKKA PYJAMAS AND NIGHTSHIRTS for men, women and boys. www.pukkapyjamas.co.uk

Eye to Eye

Replying to a box number is as simple as sending a letter, just send your reply to Private Eye, Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London, WC2E 7HR. Remember to quote on your envelope the box number to which you are replying.

LOVING LINKS. UK's leading discreet adult dating service since 1994. Unique top level one-to-one matching service and fast online email system. Call David for a chat on 08456 440 919.

KCDATING: SPEED DATING FOR GROWN-UPS! Age 35+ with no upper age limit: Speed Dating events: Manchester, September 24; Norwich, October 8; London (West End), October 15; Newcastle, October 22; Bristol, November 20. Online bookings at: www.kcdating.co.uk Plus, KCDATING's unique PRIVATE CLIENT MATCHMAKING: bespoke arrangements for the discerning, mature professional person. KCDATING will introduce you to men/women you really do want to meet! Tel: 01728 635064 and 07986 213120.

MEET COUNTRYSIDE LOVERS: www.countrysidelove.co.uk

PERSON TO PERSON – non-internet magazine for new friends/partners. Est. 1984: still going 'cos it works! Details (Dept PE), PO BOX 40, Minehead TA24 5YS. Tel: 01643 709509.

ATTRACTIONS: meet new people adult dating agency. Telephone 07806 943362.

TOP DRAWER TOTTY – stunning, affluent, educated ladies, seeking LTR/marriage with TOP professional males to 50. Intrigued? www.topdrawertotty.co.cc

HOLIDAY COMPANION: fit, fun and successful man would like to meet likeminded lady to spend two weeks in the Caribbean with and perhaps beyond that. You are articulate, fun, 40s-50s tactile and London-based. Telephone: 07774 725044.

HARD-WORKING NURSE seeks less pressurized fun times ahead. Attractive, articulate, good company. Wit and womanly warmth awaits. Telephone: 07765 050305.

999FRIENDS.co.uk Friendship / dating. Great way to meet firefighters, nurses, police, paramedics, doctors…

FEMALE WANTED, 38-48, for good looking GSOH, cuddly, well-educated male, huge music, movies fan. Phone/text: 07910 4741111.

NICE MAN, 31, would like to meet easy-going older woman, 45-69. niceman2008@hotmail.co.uk

ATTRACTIVE, UNCONVENTIONAL GUY, 40s, seeks gently wicked soul mate for adventure and passion. SE Paul on 07773 993318.

Eye Novelties

STUFF FOR FUN @ www.gizmoandwidget.com A brilliant site for novelties!

YOUR SPECIAL MESSAGE revealed in a BESPOKE CROSSWORD. www.giftpuzzles.co.uk Tel: 01273 252337.

FOR MORE THAN JUST NUMBERS, visit www.sudokuwordsearch.co.uk

TITLES: LORD, LADY ETC. Tel/fax: 0800 652 6641. www.elitetitles.co.uk

HILARIOUS, INTERACTIVE, animated cautionary tales for older boys and girls. www.shockhoodpeter.co.uk 100% free.

Eye Escape

EXPERIENCED THE MALVERNS YET? Clear air, pure water, sheer enjoyment. Colwall Park Hotel in the glorious Malvern Hills – featured in Michelin, Good Food & Good Hotel Guides. Gourmet Breaks from £90.00 pppn. Tel: 01684 540 000. www.colwall.co.uk

BRECKS HOTEL, BLACKPOOL. Budget accommodation from £20 pppn. Tel: 07960 763 619. breckshotel2005@btinternet.com

POLO – get started with the right Polo holiday – Fiona@farfrontiers.com

MEXICAN SIERRA MADRE. We travel the real 'Bandit Roads'. 4X4 or KTM. 'True grit'. Luxury. What's left of the 'Wild West'. Berkshire born guide. gtcars@mac.com

LUXURIOUS AND SPACIOUS HOUSE in coastal village in Pembrokeshire National Park. Sleeps 10. Two pubs and shop. Available Christmas and New Year. www.globe-house.co.uk

CORNWALL (FEOCK). Creekside bungalow, beautiful views, with own foreshore. www.penpol-creek.info

USA VILLA RENTALS: book luxury villas direct with owners. Florida, Disney, etc. http://www.usavillarentals.com

NORFOLK HOLIDAY COTTAGES. Peaceful location near Broads and coast. Dogs welcome. www.holidayatriverfarm.co.uk Tel: 01692 405355.

Eye Collect

OLD FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES WANTED (pre-1960s) by collector. Cash paid. Telephone: 020 8306 2194. Email: david.sturge@btopenworld.com

Eye Business

IMAGE ARCHIVING and database specialists. www.blackbox-ims.co.uk Telephone: 020 7456 1005.

MOBILE PHONE JAMMER (all frequencies). Pocket-sized, incredible product! info@mobysafe.com

SUCCESSFUL BARRISTER (40), seeks new career. London/SE based. Contact at: irestmycase@yahoo.co.uk

HELP WANTED to further build and expand our Funnel Cake business, (EU Distributor). To get involved call 020 8421 0087 or visit: www.funnelcakes.co.uk

ENTREPRENEURIAL Chartered Accountant / Executive coach, 30 years, commercial experience including PLCs seeking assignments, non-executive position, joint ventures. Tel: 07747 064322.

I TALK. About poison plants, drugs and murder. www.thepoisongarden.co.uk/pe

Eye Law

HAVE YOU BEEN LET DOWN BY YOUR SOLICITORS OR DOES YOUR SOLICITOR LACK THAT CUTTING EDGE? Ahmud & Co. Solicitors, the lawyers that make a difference. www.ja-solicitors.com Tel: 020 8886 1111 or info@ja-solicitors.com No Legal Aid.

YES, you can now come direct to a barrister. Tel: 020 7833 9625.

THE 'NO WIN – NO FEE' Specialists: Professional Negligence (www.proneg.co.uk). Disputed Wills & Employment Law (www.sblaw.co.uk). Accident Claims (www.newdeal-fairdeal.co.uk). Free case assessment. Telephone: 0808 155 6389.

FIND ANYBODY: www.locateperson.net Debt recovery – expert private investigation. Call +44 (0)121 247 5550 and 07773 788389.

GET OUTOF RED Ltd. We solve your debt problems between 6-18 months. Solutions not management. No new loans. No unnecessary expense. Contact Tony for a no-obligation consultation. COMMON SENSE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR BENEFIT. GET YOUR LIFE BACK. Tel: 07742 942901.

Eye Read

ACCLAIMED NEW BOOK examining parapsychology and paranormal phenomena. www.TheHiddenWhisper.com

Eye Buy

ATTIC CLEARANCE? We buy early Oz, IT, Eye etcetera: underground@shoreditch.net

Eye Christmas

FEELING MELLOW? It's pink past yellow! New gizmo tells the time using colourful light displays. Unique gift. www.chronochrome.co.uk

Eye Sell

FACTORY SURPLUS computers and notebooks, printers, digital cameras, DVD etc, etc. www.morgancomputers.co.uk or call 0870 126 4830.

OLD PERSIAN RUGS – mostly £100-£3000. Not a shop just a shed. DESMOND NORTH, East Peckham, Kent. TN12 5JB. Telephone 01622 871 353.

CONGESTION CHARGE BLUES? Don't drive! Stay at home and give the money you save to us not Boris. He gives you a ticket while we'll give you the cheapest flat screen TVs, home-cinema and hi-fi in town. Call 0845 900 1230 for your nearest store or check out www.richersounds.com

EYES 379 TO DATE: a few missing. Offers: 01491 873117.

DIAMOND JEWELLERY DIRECT FRON THE CRAFTSMEN. Why pay retail? Save £££s! www.jonsjewels.co.uk

236 VINTAGE EYES, 1966 to 1987. Details on line: www.cotswoldwireless.co.uk/englang//private_eyes.htm

WHY PAY A MILLION PLUS to live near the sea in Dorset? Large, prestigious, family-sized, detached property near to sea, moorings and local attractions. Very flexible accommodation with integral flat. For full details email pin.win@live.com

Eye Need

COLLAPSED DRAIN on newly brought property. £5000 to dig up road. Insurance won't pay. Please help! S/C: 40-35-34. A/C: 42420449.

GIFTED SA STUDENT faces crippling debt to finish PhD. S/C: 40-02-03. A/C: 61488414. savemydoctorate@gmail.com

To book your advert online go to www.eyeadvertise.co.uk

DESPERATE DISABLED LADY (respectable / genuine) doesn't want charity, just a chance. Driven out of home by thugs / incompetent authorities – need new one (rent guaranteed) and cash work (neurological disorder / able bodied. Proof available. http://desperatedisabledlady.blogspot.com

WIDOW, 40, wishes to financially support her daughter to fulfil her dreams by becoming a doctor after the tragic loss of her dad. Contribution greatly appreciated. S/C: 30-93-38. A/C: 00470883.

VICTIM OF AGEISM: Turned over by property developer. Flooded. Intelligent educated guy working 100 hours / week in meaningless job to make ends meet. S/C: 40-05-33. A/C: 71032682. Would sooner have proper employment. abcons_uk@yahoo.co.uk

INNER CITY VICAR needs £20K interest-free loan to clear debts. Please help. poorparson@yahoo.com

FUTURE YOUNG ARMY OFFICER appreciates contributions to AOSB RMAS RCB. S/C: 300045. A/C: 83976411.

NEXT BIG INDIE BAND, the 7.20s, require help: recordings / CD costs. www.myspace.com/720s. S/C: 40-19-31. A/C: 21468537.Backers publicized. Thanks.

HATE SPEED-DATING, love cerebral stimulation. Pay £28-£100 into Barclays, S/C: 20-94-48. A/C: 30655945 then www.straphaelsos.com

LADY IN FINANCIAL DISTRESS. Any help appreciated. Reply to neddy8989@yahoo.co.uk and send cash cheques to Box 259203.

A LITTLE HELP: I just need a little help to get back on my feet, please. Thanks. Barclays, S/C: 20-80-57. A/C: 40627763.

CREDIT CRUNCH BRIT seeks 4K donation / loan to start transport / removal business. NatWest, S/C: 60-40-05. A/C: 32127855. Email: danvanplan@googlemail.com

STRUGGLING LONE PARENT in debt; £30,000 due to nasty illness. Miracle needed. HSBC, S/C: 40-06-21. A/C: 31716948.

DAUGHTER DOING CHARITY WORK in Asia during gap year for 4 months, need £4500, chunk going to the community. Single mum needs support to help with her finance, all money gratefully received. Thank you. Nationwide, S/C: 07-01-16. A/C: 36686328.

MARTIN AMIS IS DARTH VADER to my Luke Skywalker. Need help with £4000 fees to study under / overthrow Darth. Email: pleasehelp1234@rocketmail.co.uk HSBC, S/C: 40-38-17. A/C: 21347470.

CELTIC LION LTD seeks £2 billion to restore planet's ecological life support systems. info@celticlion.org. Tel: 07946 033503.

Eye Care

GET SORTED: fast, effective and proven recovery from addiction, depression, anxiety, stress. Regain control now! www.londonhumangivens.com Tel: 020 7467 8521.

For display advertising call Ian Mehrer on 020 7878 2366

Eye Services

PRIVATE LONDON CLINIC: (Moorgate/Old Street tubes) offers walk-in and postal sexual health services, online impotence treatment. Open evenings. Tel: 020 7490 8988. www.DrThom.com

VAT PROBLEMS? Taxman on your case? Speak to Eamon McNicholas. www.EamonMcNicholas.com

REMOVALS AND STORAGE: UK and European. www.bayesofhampstead.co.uk Tel: 020 7435 3694.

BUGGERS: professional security sweeps. www.stopthebuggers.com Email: info@buggers.co.uk Tel: 01342 719361.

FIND ANYBODY: www.locateperson.net – James Black LL.B(Hons) expert private investigation, international +44 (0) 121 247 5550 and 07773 788389.

WWW.TRACINGPEOPLE.NET Email: info@tracingpeople.net Tel: 01342 719361. Fax: 01342 719641.

SPEECH LOOMING? Relax, I'll write it for you! You're due to speak at a wedding / dinner / event. Don't waste time worrying. Lawrence: 07970 046 230 or www.greatspeechwriting.co.uk

MICROSOFT EXCEL / DATA ANALYSIS – databases, spreadsheets and models built to requirement and emailed. Cheaper than on-site consultants. Confidential MBA financial analyst, long experience, blue chip to start-ups. Satisfaction or no payment. After sales support. jake@vetroconsulting.com Tel: 07815 933 517. www.vetroconsulting.com

SLIDES/NEGATIVES onto CD/DVD. Digital photo restoration. Friendly, efficient service. www.digitiseyourphotos.co.uk

CV WRITING SERVICES? The CV Doctor is in... www.thecvdoctor.co.uk Tel: 07894 083652.

SMS KEYWORDS FOR ALL. You can now have a KEYWORD and SHORTCODE for only £20 per month.Text INFO to 85118 or visit: www.TxtM8.co.uk

OPERATOR SEEKS EMPLOYMENT. Qualified barrister. Trained and experienced in the following: intelligence-led investigation, investigative interviewing, Anacapa, surveillance. Presentable, articulate, tough guy. Bored shitless and need a challenge. Please, please, please, no James Bond wet dream fantasists. Email michaelhatescomputers@gmail.com

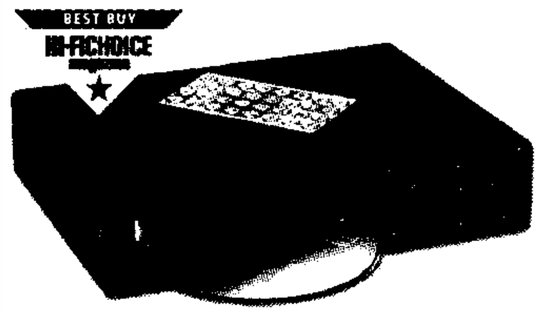
OUTLOOK/EXCHANGE programming. We can do anything. al@mckinnonsoftware.co.uk

PR. Need a good agency to make your marketing budget work harder? B2B specialists with guaranteed ROI. www.Fridays-Group.co.uk

Swim at Home
The Endless Pool... perfect for swimming, exercise, therapy and family fun! Indoors or out. Local dealers available.
Call or go online for a free DVD:
0800 520 0433 ext. 6236
www.endlesspools.co.uk/6236

Got CDs?

The Brennan is a new kind of CD player that holds 2,500 CDs. Find anything in seconds, no clutter, dead easy, great fun.



From £299

www.3ga.org.uk
Or call **01638 615117**
Quote eye for free delivery

Lost out due to bad advice?

Why don't you sue your accountant/solicitor /surveyor?

Contact: GORVINS on 0800 015 9986 or email enquiries@gorvins.com

APPLEBY ASSOCIATES

Are you at a career crossroads?

Seeking the right advice and support?

www.ApplebyAssociates.com

0845 66 55 215

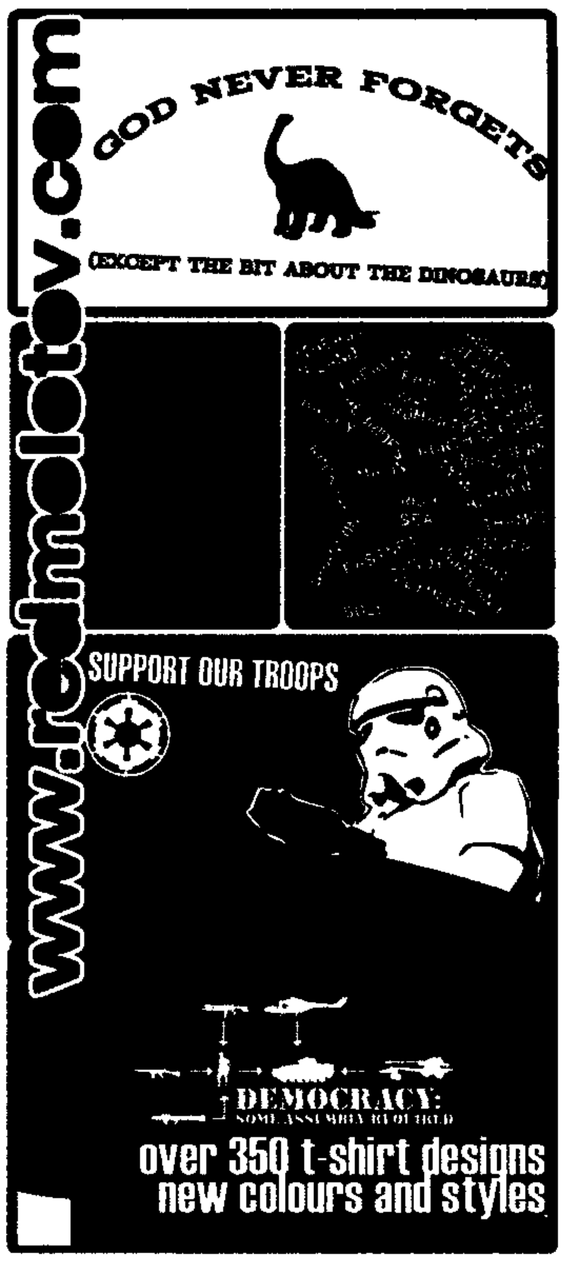
To place an advertisement in the classified pages of Private Eye call 020 7240 9129

ripcaster.co.uk

New iPod - Now What?

Tel: 0118 321 82 92 www.ripcaster.co.uk

Let us convert your CDs We Do It For You



Brian Jenner

SPEECHWRITER
SOCIAL · BUSINESS · POLITICAL
www.brianjenner.com
01202 551257

Cardiac Risk in the Young

www.c-r-y.org.uk 01737 363222

Every week, at least 8 'apparently fit and healthy' young people die in the UK from undiagnosed heart conditions

To make a donation to CRY, visit www.c-r-y.org.uk/donate.htm

You can donate £3 to CRY by texting CRY to 84858*

*Messages charged at standard rate. You will receive two confirmation messages, charged at £1.50 each. CRY will receive your donation net of charges applied by mobile network operators and a processing fee. If you have any questions regarding this service, please call 020 7549 2222

To book your advert online go to **www.eyeadvertise.co.uk**

Peter Christian Special Offer Flat Front Chino Trousers

Chino Trousers

Special Offer

£25 a pair when you buy two pairs or more

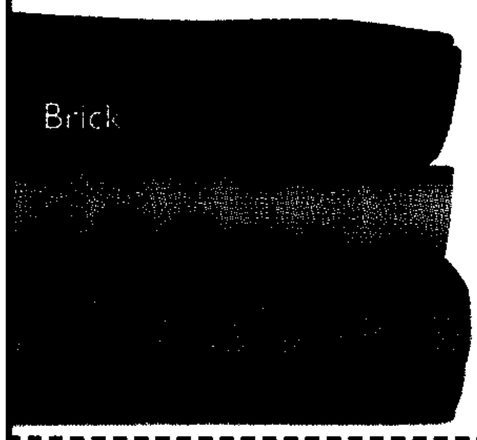
Why pay £50 plus for chinos of this quality when you can buy two pairs for the same price? These trousers are made in 100% cotton with a classic flat front. Available in 3 great colours - Brick, Stone or Mustard. Remember, only Peter Christian Chinos have...

...our Original Peter Christian Comfort System

The ultimate waist comfort system that flexes with your every move. Too tight? The waistband expands to give you more room. Hidden waist adjusters that give up to 2 extra inches of comfort.

- 1 zipped and 1 buttoned hip pocket
- 100% Cotton
- Flat front
- Secure french bearer fly fastening
- Machine washable

Free return service and money back guaranteed if not delighted



Peter Christian

Order Now

01273 493 393

open 8am-8pm 7 days a week

www.peterchristian.co.uk

Winner of best 'Mens Apparel & Accessories' catalogue ECMOD 2006 & 2007 Awards!

By phone **quote 50/X/38** or please send your coupon & payment to:
Peter Christian, 25 Mackley Estate, Henfield Road, Small Dole, West Sussex, BN5 9XR

Please send me	Code	Colour	Waist	Ins Leg	Qty	Total
Flat Front Chino	MT22					
Flat Front Chino	MT22					
Flat Front Chino	MT22					
Colours: Brick, Stone, Mustard **Waist:** 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48 **Inside Leg:** 28, 30, 32, 34					p&p **Total**	**£4.00**

Please send me ☐ 1 pair for £30 +£4 p&p = £34
☐ 2 pairs for £50 +£4 p&p = £54 ☐ 3 pairs for £75 +£4 p&p = £79

I enclose a cheque made out to Peter Christian for £_____
or please charge my credit/debit card. Card Type_____

Card No | Valid from | Expiry date | Maestro Issue no | 3 Digit Security No

Name

Address

Postcode Tel

E-mail

Please allow up to 14 days for delivery. If you do not wish us to pass your details on to other companies please tick the box ☐ A Division of Hills of Bramley Ltd Co Reg No 0476802

THE KISS ART DINNER AUCTION is to be held at
The Café Royal, Piccadilly, London on November 14th 2008
When LIPSTICK KISSES & SIGNATURES of the gorgeous people above and others shall be auctioned in order that we might buy a new Scanner for The Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital
For tickets, to make a donation or, more information visit www.kissart.org or www.fivestarsappeal.co.uk
Tel 0161 79 888 05
KISS ART

Have you got room to express yourself?

garden retreat or simply more space to work or relax.

T: 01949 860 482

E: info@garden-studios.com

garden studios

www.garden-studios.com

ROLEX

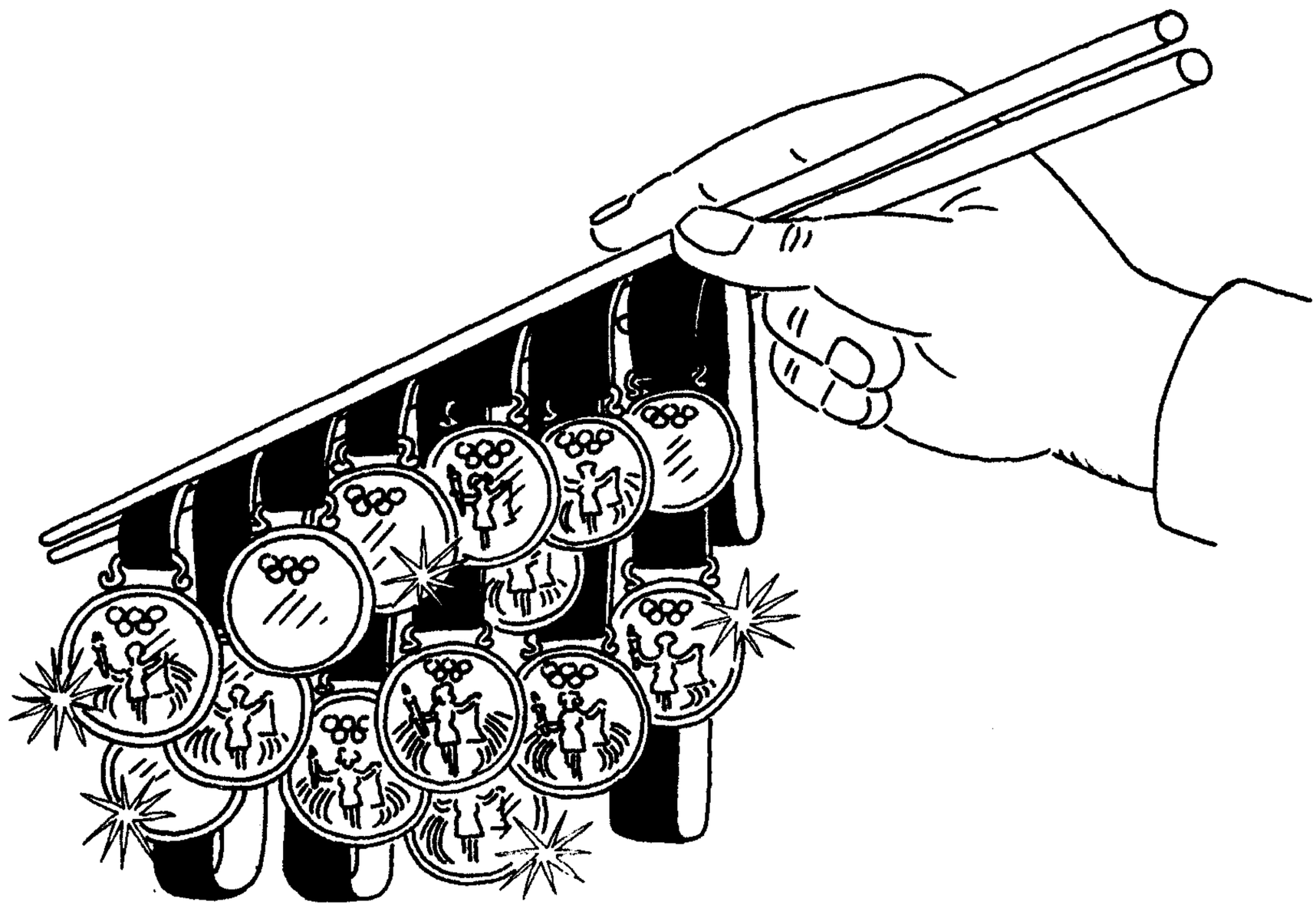
OYSTER PERPETUAL
LADY-DATEJUST
ROLEX.COM

GOLDSMITHS
SINCE 1778
THE FIRST ROLEX JEWELLER

WATCHES OF SWITZERLAND

MAPPIN & WEBB

For your nearest stockist call FREE on 0800 849 50 51. Watch featured subject to stock availability.



THE GREAT CHINESE TAKE AWAY

wisdom

You don't need a fortune cookie to tell you that Witan are just as committed to delivering superb results as Team GB.

Witan investment trust

0800 082 81 80 | www.witan.com quoting ref. 4041

Please remember, past performance is not a guide to future performance, and the value of your shares and the income from them can rise and fall, so you may not get back the amount originally invested. Issued and approved by Witan Investment Services Limited. Witan Investment Services Limited is registered in England no. 5272533 of 4 Broadgate, London EC2M 2DA. Witan Investment Services Limited provides investment products and services and is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Calls may be recorded for our mutual protection and to improve customer service.

9 770032 888129 38>